"Where there is no vision the people perish"

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The Poetry Review

WAR POETRY FROM OCCUPIED HOLLAND

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Vol. XXXV CONTENTS No. 4

	PAGE
The One Poet of the Generation, Cullen Jones	189
Beauty, Edith A. Vassie	190
Siegfried Sassoon, Athalie Bushnell	191
Gale, W. H. Dennett-Morgan	199
Alun Lewis, Poet of this War, John Waller	201
To H.M.C. Going Overseas, P. E. Croome	203
Youth and the Aftermath, Charley P. Palmer ; *Brixham Harbour,* Clive Sansom	204
Four Poems by K. J. Dover	205
Song, Brian Hill	206
Four Poems by Maurice Burke	207
Arthurians, 1944, A. Edward Farmer	208
Four Poems by Jean Kenward	209
Reveille, Cynthia Palmer ; *Poem,* A. E. Johnson	210
The Word, Howard Sargeant	211
English Earth, Wrenne Jarman	212
Rabindranath Tagore, M. H. Noel-Paton	213
Waking in the Country, Beatrice Mayor ; *Poem,* John B. Pick	214
Memorial to a Poet, Langford Reed	215
The Poems of K. C. Spiers (some extracts)	216
The Song of the Sea, Christine L. Henderson	218
When, Roberta Shuttleworth	219
My First Sonnet, Howard Parsons	223
To My Wife, F. Harvey Vivian ; *Cheap Street, Frome,* T. Pittway	224
War Poetry from Occupied Holland, Preface by H. E. M. G. Bolkestein, Introdnction by E. Jansen, and Translations by C. M. MacInnes	225
The Rainbow Arch, Dallas Kenmare	239
The Chesterton Biography, Patrick Braybrooke	243
Letters, Plays, Poems reviewed by Maurice Lindsay	246
Poets and Pretenders	251
The Premium Editor's Report	254
Dynamics of American Poetry, CIII, Alice Hunt Bartlett	256
Selected Poems of 1944	259
Notes, Reports, Announcements	iii, etc.

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THE ONE POET OF THE GENERATION

ONE of the most interesting literary phenomena of our time is the tremendous number of poetasters, pseudo-poets, literary crack-pots and literary racketeers who flit about the vague hinterland of the artistic field, each mumbling or shouting his particular gospel or demonstrating his particular "genius." Normally such numbers would suggest power, money power, religious power, military power, for power has always been the prime seducer of the mob and the edge of competition.

But this is certainly not the case of poetry. The remuneration is small and the honour, if any, so interlarded with contempt and lack of appreciation that all but the most obstinate are dissuaded. Therefore the power of the poet, despite poetic lines to the contrary, is practically nil. Even the foremost contemporaneous names actually only represent a leadership of some particular hybrid school and in most instances of the minority school of "modern" literary thought.

Literary history suggests that actual geniuses come into being at rare intervals indeed. There has been but one Shakespeare. Probably a dozen other names would cover the entire English-speaking group since Chaucer, whose work has had the inevitable mark of the "all time" great.

Then why all this fuss of the poetaster, the men of minor talent, the experimenters, the victims of the fakers and the foolish ? Little poetry magazines exhibit the work of dozens, perhaps hundreds, of strugglers in the poetic field. Anthologies of the "moderns," from bad to worse, add their selected victims. Discourses, criticisms and debates within this petty group, on both essentials and non-essentials, compare favourably with the gross content of the Congressional record. Publishers of poetry turn out an appalling number of volumes, principally to perpetuate the ego of the stupid ; however, each is accompanied by courteous or silly remarks as to the exceptional quality of verse to be found within the self-purchased covers.

From a purely objective viewpoint, nothing in modern times appears more foolish than this excessive ado about very little. And yet when one examines the record closely, he finds a seriousness of purpose that is excelled only in the pulpit or by those followers of ideologies that lead to war.

This combination of facts has caused me a great deal of uneasiness and has cast a shadow on the pleasure gained through "communing with the great" and has given some credence to the statement that poets enjoy only their own poetry.

I have asked, "What useful purpose does this literary army serve ? Limited in talent, basically wrong in concept, actually limited in appreciation, zealously—almost fanatically upholding illogical and inartistic precepts foisted on them by psychological misfits, usually persons who have developed a defence mechanism against failure by proving that their so-called failure or inability is actually the greatest success ?"

It seemed that this great galaxy of fools, of which I am probably a charter member, was dangerous in that it might be perverting or submerging genius. However, gradually my thought has changed.

This group does serve a useful purpose. Preparation must be made for the coming of genius. Those pertinent elements which even the genius must observe and perhaps learn must be kept alive. When he approaches the artistic literary field he must debate form, technique and most of those somewhat superficial yet necessary factors to garnish the output of genius. We must keep his supper warm. We must keep his utensils ready and the tools sharp for his selection. Genius will select subconsciously with perhaps a bored nonchalance. If a Milton, the medium of blank verse with an unparalleled sonorousness of diction ; if a Burns, the simple mechanics of the song ; if a Keats, perhaps the ode. He will with unerring exactness cast aside our silly antics and our empty phrases ; he will pass over the extraneous and the ill-

advised remarks ; he will use only that which will complement his artistic personality ; he will found a literary school without being aware of his prophecy or his apostles.

As a homely illustration, we might imagine many hundreds of athletes competing in the running of the hundred yard dash in approximately eleven seconds ; each one noisily arguing the benefits of his particular dogma—starting blocks, rhythm, stride, condition, finish and so on. The country boy, somewhat bewildered by these many words, yet admitting that he might be able to run a little, steps to the mark and completes the dash in eight seconds. But the spikes, the blocks, the arguments on conditioning and training and running rhythm have helped this running "genius" who, otherwise, might have made a mere nine seconds.

It is unfortunate that the artistic foot race is not quite so simple to illustrate. Nevertheless, it is applicable. Our obligation to the coming Shakespeare or Wordsworth then is to attempt to limit the non-essential as much as possible and to demonstrate as ably as our feeble talent will permit the potentialities of the "tools of the trade," such as the cohesive effect of the simple, the dramatic element of repression, the limitations of connotation, the imagistic necessity. We must be alive to the necessary freshening of the vocabulary, but not at the expense of meaning or sense ; a carpenter never hammers with his saw. We must analyse "the thing itself," the "exact word" and the inartistic scramble to prove genius through pure noise and ego. As to experimentation, it should be so labeled and continue in all forms, but only in the manner of a military operation : by sending out patrols to test the enemy's position, by reconnaissance of the enemy's flanks, by infiltration through the first line of defence, by not committing our reserves until we have a clear picture of the "situation" result in annihilation. The accepted proof of the "situation" has many ramifications. In the case of strychnine, small doses may help the patient, but the entire content of the bottle will undoubtedly bring on a complete "artistic failure."

Therefore, let this poetic army bivouac in their many uniforms and in their many tents ; permit the brigades of experimenters their test tubes to prove their own error ; allow the sophists and the scholiasts to finish their sermons. Even permit the faker to exploit the moron. The philosophy of a Plato or the poetry of a Dante rises above and in spite of all conditions to the contrary. However, the members of the literary mob should re-evaluate their personal genius or their exclusive literary understanding long enough to be objective in their assistance to the one poet of this generation, wherever and whomever he may be.

Lieut.-Colonel, G.S.C., Fort Douglas, Utah. CULLEN JONES.

BEAUTY

'TIS said that "Beauty is God's antidote
To grief." So I would wander through the woods
Where crookèd paths are rainbow hued with flowers,
And seek the haunts of birds' sweet solitudes.
And then afar I'd roam, where moors windswept
Stretch wide before my freedom loving eyes,
And listen to the music of the whaup
As slow it passes on, with lonely cries . . . .
But when the sunset fills the glens with flame,
I'd climb the twisting road to watch the mist
Slip softly over distant hills for sleep,
Comingling blue and grey with amethyst.

EDITH A. VASSIE.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

SASSOON the memoir-writer is as well-known in the world of letters to-day as is Sassoon the poet: but it was by the publication of his war-poems in 1918 that he first won fame. Terrible in their realism, embodying the unadulterated truth, his poems held little of the high-flown patriotism of "The Soldier," but all the bitter disillusionment of those who fought on, through the mismanagement of 1916, 1917, 1918, and who emerged in 1919, sadder and wiser men. It was not until a decade later that Sassoon began to show himself a great master of English prose in his series of semi-autobiographical memoirs.

Siegfried Loraine Sassoon was born in Kent in September, 1886, of a Jewish father and an English mother. He was the second of three brothers. His childhood was clouded by the fact that his father and mother ceased to live together and except for occasional visits the children saw nothing of their father. When Siegfried was only eight his father died of consumption: thus ended the boys' two-fold allegiance. That same spring, Siegfried developed pneumonia and while convalescing his brothers were forbidden to disturb him and he first discovered that he enjoyed being alone. It was then, too, that poetry first began to touch a chord in his mind. All three boys were at first educated at home as they were held to be delicate; thus they met few other children and learned to make their own company sufficient for their games and lessons. Riding and cricket became Siegfried's favourite sports, under the tuition of a groom, and in later years meets of the local hunt and village cricket matches formed an important part of his time-table.

By the age of ten Siegfried had begun to associate music and poetry with a certain indefinable inward emotion: what he calls "a sort of 'As you like it' feeling." Together with his brothers he had been taken, by his father's sister, Rachel Beer, to see that play. It was his first visit to a theatre. His Aunt Rachel was very sad at the long illness of her husband, and the little boy longed to be able to transport her to a dream-like Forest of Arden: a dream impregnated by the story of Orpheus and Eurydice—the foredoomed attempt to bring back to life his aunt's happiness.

His mother's family, the Thornycrofts, were all talented sculptors. Siegfried's grandmother had sculptured marble busts of all Queen Victoria's children and his mother had been an Academy student and was an excellent figure and landscape painter, while he himself inherited no small degree of artistic ability.

About 1897 the boys' lessons from a Mr. Moon were supplemented by the efforts of a Fräulein, who lived in and taught French, German and music. By this time Siegfried and his mother, to whom he presented MSS. of his own poetry decorated by himself, were both convinced that he was destined to be a great poet, but his brothers—after the manner of brothers and sisters—thought his scribblings tommy-rot and preferred their more practical engineering work. Towards the end of 1897, Siegfried was engaged in writing out and illuminating his second book of poems to give to his mother at Christmas. The illustration and embellishment was done in coloured inks and on one occasion he was experimenting with his silver ink when his eldest brother kicked the leg of the table, causing him to smudge the page. The younger boy held this to have been done deliberately and in return punched his brother so hard on the nose as to make it bleed. Siegfried, in disgrace, was left alone to try to undo the damage done to the page, on which was the first stanza of his "Vision of Death":

> So evening fell and everything seemed sad
> And overcome by weariness and gloom.
> Slowly a knight in snowy samite clad
> Was borne away to the darkness of the tomb.

Most of those early poems were on the themes of death and eternity.

In *The Old Century,* Sassoon himself says that it is interesting to note the difference between the two manuscript books of this year. In the earlier one the handwriting is small and childishly refined and the drawings pleasing. But in the later volume the handwriting is large and untidy and the illustrations crude. The artistic sense, almost instinctive in the child, was forsaking the growing lad and in future would be a matter of voluntary rather than involuntary effort; while the poetic impulse was becoming more unrestrained. Being a poet seemed a complex affair. All the poets whose works he had read as yet were dead, with the exception of Swinburne, and concerning him the only stories which his mother—who had once met the poet—could tell him seemed unworthy of a poet. In the same year Sassoon went to an exhibition of G. F. Watts' pictures in London. The boy-poet was greatly influenced by "Signor" and always gained great delight from gazing at those paintings in which he was able to find so much poetry.

Two years later the eldest of the Sassoon brothers, Michael, was sent to school and Siegfried and Hamo had a new tutor, a Mr. Hamilton, nicknamed "The Beet," who earned the admiration of Siegfried by having been in the Rugby eleven, and at Cambridge captain of his college cricket team. A big bonfire was the two young Sassoons' idea of celebrating the *fin-de-siècle* that December: a bonfire of their once much-beloved Fort (built in the garden), which in its turn had taken the place of and was built with some materials from the original "Build," the creation of which had caused great excitement in 1893. That bonfire was not only consuming symbolically "the old century," but the years of childhood passed in the last years of the departing century; a new leaf was turned.

In the summer of 1900 Siegfried and Hamo accompanied Michael to boarding-school, where Siegfried soon became known as "The Onion," implying that he was a bit "off his onion"; but he was happy at school and could show his mettle at his beloved cricket. During his last term at that preparatory school "Sassoon Major" (as he now was) became very sensible of his position of importance and trust and thereby gained from the headmaster the nickname of "Dook Sig." Next term he entered Marlborough, where he progressed quite well until measles, followed by double pneumonia, laid him low for a time. His new form master, when he returned to school, sometimes offered a prize of half-a-crown for the best poem written by one of his form—and Sassoon was usually the winner. The following poem—his first to win the prize—was framed and hung up in the form-room:

My life at school is fraught with care,
Replete with many a sorrow.
When evening shadows fall I dare
Not think about to-morrow.

The extra lesson doth correct
My wandering attention:
And other things which I expect
It might give pain to mention.

But extra lessons cannot kill,
And blows are not so hard
That they will end the life of this
Ambitious little bard.

In the same year Sassoon also tried more ambitious versifications—on the illness of King Edward VII, which caused the postponement of his Coronation—and an ode on the death of King Richard II. A strained heart and ophthalmia due to overwork—

both at lessons and at games—put an end to his third term before the official break-up. During the next few months of enforced leisure at home Sassoon set to work to collect a real library of his own : a roomful of leather-bound tomes, such as one might dream about. He obtained his mother's permission to sell a few books which had belonged to his father, and set to work selling and buying through booksellers' catalogues. The volumes soon accumulated and their outsides gave exactly the required satisfaction, although their insides proved of little attraction to the schoolboy. It was still the era of calf-bound libraries.

His first poem in print appeared in *Cricket* about this time ; "The Extra Inch," a parody on "The Sands of Dee," concerned itself with the question of the moment—the discussion about the alteration of the height of wickets :

O batsman, rise and go and stop the rot,
And go and stop the rot.
(It was indeed a rot,
Six down for twenty-three.)
The batsman thought how wretched was his lot,
And all alone went he . . . . . .

Sassoon's last year at Marlborough was spent in the Lower Fifth—second division—half way up the school, where he felt he was merely marking time till he could leave. The young poet's artistic leanings amused his form master when, every week, his Latin prose would be carefully copied out in pseudo-Gothic characters in red ink—though at gilding the master had to draw the line. The next year was filled in at a "cramming establishment," whither Sassoon went to prepare for "Little-go" and Cambridge.

His guardians had suggested Sassoon's reading for the Bar after Cambridge, and therefore he plunged into the Law Tripos, dutifully attending lectures and reading text-books incomprehensible to him, until the senior tutor of his college, Clare, suggested the History Tripos might be more attractive and provide more scope for his poetic imagination. But political intricacies proved insurmountable to the poet who "wanted (history) to be more like Stanley Weyman's novels or Shakespeare's plays." Day-dreaming and versifying—and the poems he produced this year were many—with the poems and pictures of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in his mind—would somehow take precedence over the History of Europe in spite of all his efforts. On a suggestion by his uncle, Sassoon determined to win the Chancellor's Medal as a counterblast to the certain disaster awaiting him in the History Tripos. The subject for the next year's poem happened to be "Edward the First." With a dramatic monologue in his mind Sassoon dashed off a Browningesque opening in which King Edward was meditating on the eve of the Battle of Crécy : it was galling to find next day, having bought Professor Tout's book on Edward I, that Crécy was not fought for about forty years after the death of "The Hammer of the Scots." A study of that monarch's life found no scope for poetry : singularly practical in all he undertook, whether it were legislative or military, Edward seemed to have lacked that quality—whatever it may be—that makes a subject eminently suitable for epics. During this year, 1906, Sassoon had the satisfaction of having his first volume of poems "in the Press." The Athenaeum Press printed, for £7, fifty copies, each of thirty-six pages, bound in thick white cartridge paper, of *Poems :* the effort was anonymous. But at last the Edward I poem was finished and, although the king was certainly reminiscent of Tennyson's King Arthur, it seemed to both the author and his mother to have a very good chance of winning. When the results appeared it was a great disappointment for him to learn that someone else had won the medal.

That verdict settled the question of his Cambridge career; he had never coveted a degree and had not the faintest hope of passing the Tripos examination. Clearly his only natural gift was for poetry and a poet henceforth he determined to be, an ambition with which his mother entirely agreed; so, after four terms at Cambridge, at the age of twenty, he went down from the University, self-ploughed, and substituted for scholarship a life of cricket, riding and hunting neatly wedded to book-collecting and poetry-writing in the lovely Kentish country where he had spent his childhood.

The first money Sassoon ever earned by his poetry was 3s. 6d.—paid him by a poetry magazine called *The Thrush*—for a roundel entitled "Dawn Dimness": consequently, when T. W. H. Crosland, of *The Academy*, offered him a guinea each for nine sonnets, Sassoon was somewhat elated, oblivious to the fact that, as only his initials were to be appended to his poems, his reputation as a poet would not be greatly enhanced.

A year previously, in 1908, his second privately-printed volume had appeared, a one-act play entitled *Orpheus in Diloeryum;* then, in 1909, the Athenaeum Press printed *Sonnets and Verses* "for private circulation." This work was very soon to become extinct, with the exception of one ordinary and three special "black buckram" copies, for, one night, in a fit of self-depreciation, the young poet consigned the remainder of the edition to the flames. An old friend of the family, Helen Wirgman, to whom he showed his efforts, advised Sassoon to write in a more "physical" way; to put more "solid thought" into his work, and recommended him to study Meredith. With copious revision a reprint of the "Sonnets" appeared later the same year.

Three years later Sassoon composed an "Ode for Music": one hundred lines of overwhelming ecstasy written under the influence of "The Hound of Heaven." Later, after reading "The Everlasting Mercy," the medium of parody suddenly appealed to him, and the result was burlesqued Masefield in a story of "a Sussex farm-hand awaiting trial for accidental homicide of the barman of the village alehouse." The finished product consisted of five hundred lines of vigorous narrative. T. W. H. Crosland, to whom Sassoon sent a copy of this parody and who had already published the "Ode for Music" in *The Antidote,* offered to publish this new work, if the poet contributed towards expenses, as *The Daffodil Murderer.* The parody appeared under the pseudonymous authorship of "Saul Kain" and Crosland himself, who was well-versed in the art of attacking Masefield's narrative poems, wrote a facetious preface to the booklet. The only review which this venture received appeared in *The Athenaeum,* where it was condemned mercilessly as "a weak-kneed imitation" of Masefield. Perhaps this may be explained by the fact that Crosland, who was probably thought to be the author, was at enmity with that periodical.

Edmund Gosse, whose wife was a friend of Sassoon's mother, took the poet under his wing, as he did so many others, offering advice and encouragement, and in *The Weald of Youth* Sassoon records that Gosse also introduced him to Edward Marsh, of "Georgian Poetry" fame. Marsh showed interest in the new writer and considered that he led a life too cut-off from his fellow-poets. Under his aegis Sassoon was enabled to meet Austin Dobson and, after taking rooms in Gray's Inn, where Marsh lived, W. H. Davies and his own contemporary, Rupert Brooke. Brooke and Sassoon had been up at Cambridge together for one term, but had not hitherto met; when that meeting did come to pass, at Edward Marsh's breakfast-table, Sassoon says he "felt rather like a Lower Fifth Form boy talking to the Head of the School!"

On 31st July, 1914, Sassoon—after bicycling thirty miles to Rye, partaking of a hearty tea, and bicycling back, in order to clarify his thoughts—made up his mind that he would offer his services to his country; indeed, he was by then in a frame of

mind to have been quite indignant if anyone had told him that there would be no war. He was medically examined and on the morning on which war was declared appeared in the uniform of a private in the Sussex Yeomanry. After some nine months of rough-and-tumble life in that capacity he gained a commission in the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

At this point a gossamer veil is drawn over Sassoon's real life, for the rest of his authentic autobiography is still to be written ; and yet, during the war years, we may feel that "George Sherston" and Siegfried Sassoon are indeed one person. *The Memoirs of George Sherston* first brought fame as a prose-writer to the poet. In 1928 the first volume, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man,* was published, winning for its author the Hawthornden Prize for 1929. The author himself has said of George Sherston that he was "only me with a lot left out," and speaks of "the collision" thus brought about "between fictionised reality and essayised autobiography." The fiction concerns Sherston's lonely childhood (as far as human playmates were concerned) with his Aunt Evelyn who brought him up ; while Sassoon, as we have already seen, had two lively brothers and lived with his mother and not a maiden aunt. The sporting side of Sassoon's character is fully portrayed in Sherston : fox-hunting and village cricket are as the breath of life to him. In 1930 the second volume of these fictionised memoirs appeared as *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer,* to be followed six years later by *Sherston's Progress.* Sir John Squire, while criticising Sassoon's war-poems as being uneven and sometimes unfair in their misinterpretation of the attitude of those in England to the war, has praised these memoirs as containing "all the experiences and express(ing) all the sentiments of the subalterns dead and alive." Sassoon can be very bitter in his prose as in his poetry and these volumes portray all the futility of war in the life of a young officer who spent the greater part of those four years in France and Palestine ; who was spared none of the horrors of the front line ; who won the M.C. ; and who, before those four years were over, had sufficient courage and strength of mind to make a statement denouncing the war-policy under which thousands of young and precious lives were being sacrificed, when, as he held, it was possible to bring that war to an end by negotiation.

The result of "Sherston's" remarkable statement was that, in the summer of 1917, he was sent to a war hospital near Edinburgh, suffering—according to the medical board—from shell-shock. Here he was under the care of W. H. R. Rivers, the eminent ethnologist, psychologist and neurologist, to whom, during his stay at the Hydro and until Rivers's death in 1922, Sassoon acknowledges indebtedness for his understanding and for a friendship which, he says, was the most outstanding one in his life. At Craiglockhart, Rivers pursued the study of morbid psychology and the results of his work there are embodied in his book *Conflict and Dream.*

It is probably not generally known that Craiglockhart War Hospital ("Slateford" in the Memoirs) produced a, now rare, magazine, *The Hydra,* in which some of Sassoon's poems first appeared. Two other men of letters who were fellow-patients during 1917 were the poet, Wilfred Owen, and the "cheerful young Scots Captain" mentioned by "Sherston," who may now be identified as James Bell Salmond, then editor of *The Hydra* and now editor of *The Scots Magazine,* poet and novelist.

Side by side with *The Memoirs of George Sherston* should be read Robert Graves's autobiography, *Good-bye to all That,* in which we are told that Sassoon was known among his fellow-officers as "Mad Jack." Graves tells us of the friendship that sprang up between Sassoon and himself, so that we can hardly fail to identify Graves with the David Cromlech who appears in the *Memoirs.* In the same way, by comparing the two books, we may see in the attractive figure of the young officer to whom George

Sherston was greatly attached—Dick Tiltwood—the person of David Thomas, whose tragic death Graves also recounts. When Graves was reported killed, Sassoon wrote an obituary poem, "To His Dead Body"; and it was Graves who, when the other had made his "statement," intervened and secured for him, instead of a court-martial, a medical-board, resulting in admission to Craiglockhart.

On emergence from the War Hospital, Sassoon returned to active service and at the beginning of 1918 was sent to Egypt, and thence to Palestine. In February of that year he was again in France and five months later returned, wounded, to England. And there "Sherston's" memoirs cease; with the end of the first Great War Sassoon leaves the details of his real life in obscurity as far as the public are concerned, although we learn from Graves that he took part in the General Election after the Armistice, supporting Snowden; while later he became for a time literary editor of the *Daily Herald,* which was just embarking on publication—a violently anti-militarist paper in those days.

By the publication of *Counter-Attack* in 1918 Sassoon's poems became widely known. A year previously *The Old Huntsman,* a collection of verse, had attracted little attention. Though unsparing of the ghastly nightmare of war throughout his poetry, yet beneath the biting satire lurks a profound and deep appreciation of beauty. Few poets of the Great War portrayed the horrors and sufferings of the front line so vividly as Sassoon; perhaps Wilfred Owen and Isaac Rosenberg are the two outstanding writers most akin to him. There is no glossing over, no gilding the lily—and very few lilies to gild—nothing but stark grim reality, full of pathos and emotion, because the poet has lived through all the horrors he portrays and has emerged saddened and bitter—bitter against all who engineered the war, making it a hell on earth for those who fought it, and against all who, in their civilian complacency, failed to realise anything of the foulness and blasphemy of war:

> Squire nagged and bullied till I went to fight
> (Under Lord Derby's Scheme). I died in hell . . . .

> In sermon-time, while Squire is in his pew,
> He gives my gilded name a thoughtful stare;
> For though low down upon the list, I'm there:
> "In proud and glorious memory"—that's my due.
> Two bleeding years I fought in France for Squire;
> I suffered anguish that he's never guessed;
> Once I came home on leave, and then went west.
> What greater glory could a man desire?

"Red-tape," staff-officers and politicians are his great enemies. The soldiers at the front might realise the futility of orders from the base given by comfortable elderly gentlemen smoking their cigars in large armchairs; they might even resent them, but "theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die."

> If I were fierce and bald and short of breath,
> I'd live with Scarlet Majors at the Base,
> And speed glum heroes up the line to death.
> You'd see me with my puffy petulant face,
> Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel,
> Reading the Roll of Honour. "Poor young chap,"
> I'd say—"I used to know his father well;
> Yes, we've lost heavily in this last scrap."
> And when the war is done and youth stone dead,
> I'd toddle safely home and die—in bed.

Even the women folk at home are included in his tirade : they cheer, they wait, but they do not, can not, understand.

> You love us when we're heroes, home on leave
> Or wounded in a mentionable place . . . . . .
>
> You can't believe that British troops "retire"
> When hell's last horror breaks them, and they run,
> Trampling the terrible corpses—blind with blood . . . .

Yet even in portraying ghastliness and horror, Sassoon's poetry never loses that quality by which he has won for himself a place among our national poets. An artistry which is so perfect that the verses show no outward signs of art ; their greatness lies in the effortless mastery of technique which can bring beauty into such scenes as "The Death-Bed" :

> Someone was holding water to his mouth.
> He swallowed, unresisting ; moaned and dropped
> Through crimson gloom to darkness ; and forgot
> The opiate throb and ache that was his wound.
> Water—calm, sliding green above the weir ;
> Water—a sky-lit alley for his boat,
> Bird-voiced, and bordered with reflected flowers
> And shaken hues of summer ; drifting down,
> He dipped contented oars, and sighed, and slept . . . . . .
>
> But Death replied : "I choose him." So he went,
> And there was silence in the summer night ;
> Silence and safety ; and the veils of sleep.
> Then, far away, the thudding of the guns.

Sassoon knew that soldiers of the last Great War were human ; that they did not always think noble sentiments of patriotism such as "Think only this of me . . ." They were fighting, as the soldiers of this war are fighting, for a Britain which was typified in their minds by home, freedom of speech and of thought, Saturday afternoon football and cricket matches.

> Bank-holidays, and picture shows, and spats,
> And going to the office in the train.

Writing to J. C. Squire in August, 1918, Edmund Gosse said of Sassoon : "It is profoundly true that he writes these horrors about sodden buttocks and mats of hair, simply because fortune won't let him alone to write about the things he loves." An intense lover of beauty, art and music, he had to write such poems to proclaim to the world its insanity. Among modern poets whose work is steeped in symbolism, Sassoon stands alone as an individualist. He says himself that he is an "old-fashioned defender of direct utterance" and he calls twentieth century developments in verse-making "those contemporary innovations which flatly contradict what I believe in." He maintains that the real poet will always find a way of expressing himself, he, himself, having found the most successful medium to be direct utterance. Of high value in the writing of verse he places the aural element and also inward visualisation. But, concluding the Arthur Skemp Memorial Lecture in 1939 at Bristol University, Sassoon laid stress on the overwhelming importance of whole-heartedness, sincerity, and the elimination of all inessentials in the writing of poetry. We may see that Sassoon does not only preach these doctrines, but his poems are illustrations and witnesses that he also practises them himself.

It is unfortunate that his poetry before and after the last war is relatively little-known ; he is so overwhelmingly a war-figure that all else is overshadowed. But in beauty and artistry Sassoon's work is of a high rank ; "Nativity" is a typical example :

A flower has opened in my heart . . .
What flower is this, what flower of spring,
What simple secret thing ?
It is the peace that shines apart,
The peace of daybreak skies that bring
Clear song and wild swift wing.

Heart's miracle of inward light,
What powers unknown have sown your seed
And your perfection freed ? . . . .
O flower within me wondrous white,
I know you only as my need
And my unsealèd sight.

Or "Grandeur of Ghosts" of 1924 vintage :

When I have heard small talk about great men
I climb to bed ; light my two candles ; then
Consider what was said ; and put aside
What Such-a-one remarked and Someone-else replied.

The volumes in which his poems are contained—other than the two volumes already mentioned—are : *Satirical Poems,* 1926 ; *The Heart's Journey,* 1928 ; *The Road to Ruin,* 1933 ; *Vigils,* 1935 ; and *Rhymed Ruminations,* 1940, in which year, also, a comprehensive selection covering the years 1916-1935 was published in *Poems : Newly Selected.*

History provides perhaps the widest field of subject-matter for poetry ; it has been said that the happiest nation has no history ; whether the same is true of individuals is a matter for discussion, for it involves controversy on similar lines to "one crowded hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name." At all events it is a fact that in every age, for every one person who carves a place for himself in history there must exist millions of ordinary people who make no mark, although it is of them and through them that the world exists. Glimpses of these past sojourners in the world are reflected in "Human Histories" :

The multitudinous dead, like books unread,
Are somewhere in the library of Time.
Glimpses we get of what they felt and said,
Humdrum and homely, or loftily sublime,
But mostly they are ghostly, nameless, nought,
Whose journeying shadows fell and left no trace ;
Whose worlds in worlds of woven and welded thought
Are now the language of a vanished race.
Nothing exists in life more strange than these
Lost lineaments of human histories.

But Siegfried Sassoon has earned for himself a place in the literary annals of our race. His can never be one of the shadows that "fell and left no trace" ; posterity will join with us in acknowledging that our literature is considerably richer by Sassoon's contribution to it. Perhaps the most superb flowering of the poet's genius may be found in the immortal "All Souls' Day" :

Close-wrapped in living thought I stand
Where death and daybreak divide the land,
Death and daybreak on either hand
For exit and for entry ;
While shapes like wind-blown-shadows pass,
Lost and lamenting, "Alas, alas,
This body is only shrivelling grass,
And the soul a starlit sentry
Who guards, and as he comes and goes,
Points now to daybreak's burning rose,
And now towards worldhood's charnel close
Leans with regretless warning" . . . .

I hear them thus—O thus I hear
My doomed companions crowding near,
Until my faith, absoved from fear,
Sings out into the morning,
And tells them how we travel far,
From life to life, from star to star ;
Exult, unknowing what we are ;
And quell the obscene derision
Of demon-haunters in our heart
Who work for worms and have no part
In Thee, O ultimate Power Who art
Our victory and our vision.

ATHALIE BUSHNELL.

[This is the second of Miss Bushnell's dissections of contemporary poets : others will follow : they will be published later in volume form. The writer is a member of the General Council of the University of St. Andrews.]

GALE

SURGE and toss of the restless ocean
and down the streaming wind the wild gull's cry.
White foam on the face of the wind-whipped waters.
Under a darkling sky
one small trawler beating to windward
in the teeth of the rising gale,
that flings unheeded to the waste of the water
the helmsman's hail.

Wind against sail, sail against rudder—
stress, check, and strain.
From the hard struggle slow emerges
a painful gain.

Anger and lust and sin assail us
who heaven would win,
yet the very storms that strive against us
compel us in.

W. H. DENNETT-MORGAN.

THE MADNESS OF CROSS DEEP HALL

(Destroyed by enemy action in June, 1944)

HOW shall they mourn you who built you in gladness
Yet sundered for hatred the wall from the rafter,
Goading your grace to a rubble of madness,
Of breaking and rending and thunderous laughter.

Fiercely you held me who thought you so tender,
Brutal with passion, betrayed and despairing,
Loth in your last dying stress to surrender
Those you blessed in the years of your caring.

Mellow old friend, you have fallen to crush me,
Walls that I cherished lie piled on my head,
Dust fills my mouth into slumber to hush me
Harshly to sleep in your comfortless bed.

Oh! clasp not so tightly, not I but another
Has turned you to water that falls with no gleaming
Blotting the sun in a measureless smother
That leaves me the dark and a nightmare of dreaming.

You broke me and stabbed me but left me my senses,
That still I might pant 'neath the numbness of weight,
Stripping me down to my last lone defences,
Where I must gaze through the darkness at Fate.

Gracious old house, 'tis not you that betrayed me,
Not you my slayer though fortune may send
That you hide me so deep that no mortal can aid me
Dust of my flesh mixed with yours till the end.

West Middlesex County Hospital. H. W. HARDING.

ONE . . . IS MISSING

SLOWLY the rising sun
With bloodshot eyes
Surveyed his realm below—
Caressed with warmth
The drooping grasses,
Wan with heavy tears.
And into space he cast
One hope,
One solace
One reply to tears.
The grasses whispered
And forsook their cross;
Unbent their sinuous backs
And stood compassionate.
Warm sun congealed their dew—
The blood of innocence.
Birds wept,
Their song like the crystal clear
of falling water. And slowly
The mist was born of dew
And rose to the murmured elegy
of birdsong.
Pale death and the pall of sedge—
Woodsmoke and mourners
Whispering.
The sun grew:
Towered, flushed and scorned
Earth's melancholy:
Towered, and shamed her tears—
Fears,
And cast his warmth
On shadows and dispelled
Weeping.

Pilot Officer, R.A.F. I. M. NEWNHAM.

ALUN LEWIS, POET OF THIS WAR

THE newspapers have announced that Alun Lewis, the poet and story-writer, has died on active service in India as a result of an accident. Significantly, one of the last stories of his that I read was called "Ward O ' 3 (b)," describing the characters of four officers and how these are affected by their injuries and by the fact of their being thrown together into one ward under the charge of a Sister Normanby. One of them was a Lieut. Anthony Weston—to some extent, I think, a self portrait—who had been seriously injured by the accidental explosion of an anti-tank mine. It is tragic to consider that Alun Lewis should have died in such circumstances.

In the present war Lewis is one of the few English poets whose status at all compares to that of Rupert Brooke in the last ; though his work is stronger if less fluid and in spirit he approximates far more to Edward Thomas. Now at the age of twenty-six he is a victim of the war he so much hated. He first became famous, I remember, with the poem that begins :

> All day it has rained, and we on the edge of the moors
> Have sprawled in our bell tents, moody and dull as boors,
> Groundsheets and blankets spread on the muddy ground.
> And from the first grey wakening we have found
> No refuge from the skirmishing fine rain
> And the wind that made the canvas heave and flap
> And the taut wet guy ropes ravel out and snap.

The complete poem may be found to-day in any anthology of war poetry and will for ever sum up for us that phoney war of 1939-1940.

Alun Lewis was the author of two books before he died, one of poems and one of short stories. Though the first, *Raiders' Dawn,* contains many love poems and songs, it is the war poetry that is most important. In the second book, *The Last Inspection,* Lewis shows a great sensitiveness of touch and characterisation. He has a complete understanding of the hidden substance of men's souls that makes them take otherwise inexplicable actions. And the characters he dislikes stand out with a hard cynical brilliance. One of the stories, "They Came" ("They" being the German bombers), won the E. J. O'Brien Memorial Prize for 1941.

The tragedy of Lewis is that essentially—like most poets—he hated war. And his work is everywhere expressive of the boredom, disillusionment, and regret he felt in himself and others as a result of serving in the Army. Wilfred Owen in the last war said, "The Poetry is in the Pity" ; and if Owen's pity was for the wounded and the dying, it may be said that Lewis' was for the wounded spirit and the dying heart. He describes :

> the rough immediate life of camp
> And barracks where the phallic bugle rules
> The regimented orchestra of love :
> The subterfuge of democracy, the stench
> Of breath in crowded tents, the grousing queues,
> And bawdy songs incessantly resung
> And dull relaxing in the dirty bar . . .

To all this the only relief is the normal relief of the sensitive, namely, "The pathetic contempt of the lonely for the crowd."

Though Lewis himself could rise above such a situation and obtain a commission as well as write great poetry, he realised how Army life can kill in some cases as surely as the enemy bullet. And the tragedy that he saw in this was only heightened by the fact that while so many soldiers had no better activity than cleaning buttons, drilling and parading, carrying out fatigues, or :

Smoking a Woodbine, darning dirty socks,
Reading the Sunday papers.

their wives and children were at the mercy of the enemy bombers in the towns. The irony of this appears very frequently in Lewis' short stories and is the source of the brilliantly conceived frustration and longing in some of his poems.

Yet despite Lewis' hatred of war he was in no doubt as to the clarity of the issue. He was never a pacifist, for instance, but joined the South Wales Borderers at the beginning of the war, knowing such action to be necessary. The war to him was an inevitable struggle against Fascism, with its coercion of the mind and its brutality to the flesh. And he could not bear the thought of a Fascist world that would have no place for the intellectual, for the beautiful, or for the individual. In the poem, "Raiders' Dawn," he states this loathing in a few delicate words. The raiders have gone, the house is in ruins, but

Blue necklace left — Tells that beauty
On a charred chair — Was startled there.

It is sometime before the bitterness and anger here is apparent, but when it does break through these smooth words into the reader's perception the horror of it is redoubled.

Though Alun Lewis was clear about the fundamental issue, he was at the same time a sincere writer and he could not pardon the mistakes of the war. He aimed to portray the men of his time forcing their way through into a new world and he had no mercy for those people who were blocking the path, for those whom once he summed up as

the loud celebrities
Exhorting us to slaughter.

And so, if the Nazis raiders angered him, so also did the temperamental and vicious O.C. with the ravaged young face, the captain and sergeant relying entirely upon the efficiency of their clerk who "could not get a commission because of his stoop," and the sergeant-major, with bad breath, who shouted in the men's faces until they trembled before him. These were unworthy of the cause for which Lewis and others were fighting. They were the myrmidoms of that brigadier whose last inspection had to be cancelled owing to the vastness of the farewell lunch.

Cecil Day Lewis once described the poet of our time as fighting for the bad against the worse. And it is certainly one of the grievances we have against the age that the poet has not been in a position to exercise the weapon of his own art, but has, in many cases, been placed in a situation giving him the worst possible view of his own side. And only those whose integrity has been as strong as that of Alun Lewis have been able to withstand the subtle and hostile implications that have been involved in this.

It is customary in a war poet to look for some trace of patriotism and love of country. In the work of Alun Lewis this can be found in his descriptions of the English countryside and the English setting.

And I can remember nothing dearer or more to my heart
Than the children I watched in the woods on Saturday
Shaking down burning chestnuts for the schoolyards' merry play.

And he describes in another poem :

The flash and play of finches
Who are as beautiful
And as indifferent to me
As England is, this Spring morning.

Above all, however, Lewis was a patriot in his feeling and friendship for the British soldiers he describes in his stories and who were at different times his companions. Alun Lewis once wrote :

Only the fleeting sunlight in the forest
And dragonflies blue flicker on quiet pools
Will perpetuate our vision
Who die young.

I suppose all along he realised that he would never survive the war. There is this death in his poetry that envisages that and renders it complete. "I have left," he says :

The lovely bodies of the boy and girl
Deep in each other's arms ;
And I have left
The beautiful lanes of sleep . . .

For he realises that as :

Always in Shakespearean tragedy
The foils are poisoned that the good may die.

And in this mood he wrote his final "Postscript : For Gweno" :

If I should go away,
Beloved, do not say
"He has forgotten me."
For you abide
A singing rib within my dreaming side ;
You always stay.
And in the mad tormented valley
Where blood and hunger rally
And Death the wild beast is uncaught, untamed,
Our soul withstands the terror
And has its quiet honour
Amid the glittering stars your voices named.

Alun Lewis' work is likely to endure for three reasons. First, it sums up a period effectively and finely. Second, it contains a real knowledge of humanity and a love of people. And third, Lewis saw beyond the present, and the future that he saw—though one of anguish for himself—hinted at a possible happiness for others. Of the death of a great leader it was once said : "While he lived he was the guiding star of a brave nation and when he died the little children cried in the streets." Some day this may be true of poets.

Captain, M.O.I., Middle East. JOHN WALLER.

TO H.M.C. GOING OVERSEAS, 1944

SINCE now, my only love,
We must consign each other unto danger ;
You to the treachery of battle and the seas,
I to that fly-by-night intruding stranger
Since we've no choice, my love, to go from these.

Since now we have to turn
Each from the safety of the other ;
Know this for truth, that you abide,
Not as a husband or the dearest lover,
But very heart within my aching side. P. E. CROOME.

YOU AND THE AFTERMATH

MUD-GRIMED men, black with the soil of Italian fields,
What will you say when the day of reckoning comes;
You, who touch the threads of Fate, and gamble gaily
With an eager merciless Destiny clutching
Your rich life—the stake for a game played with Hell's cards?
When the game is over, and the ghastly light
Pales into a darkened aftermath, will you see
The light of morning overcast its softening ray
Across the world's threshold, the first new clean caress;
And will you see the wreckage of a pack of cards
Strewn across the table's length in mad confusion—
All that remains of a world of ill-lit rooms
And tables set for an earth's ruin?

You, and you alone, clutch the key opening the door,
A great door, a door that opens on a lighter room
Full of windows welcoming well the light of day
And catching the moon's touch—the richer mysteries
Of this world's light, its shadows, and its gleams.

Those who never knew life's chilling darkness—the depths
Of man's despair, cannot know the cherished wish that lingers
In his soul for the magic light of glorious peace,
Streaming through the open windows, clean and bright.
There are many still in England—munition workers
Who live under the cloudiness of war; feeling
No Death's grip, are content to live ingloriously,
Gath'ring the dirty riches of the gamblers' table,
Clutching for more, discontented with their fortune—
How can men such as these live in the light again
Unless the ardent soldier, knowing what he wants,
Turns them with his visions from their unheroic lives.

Lance-Corporal. CHARLEY P. PALMER.

(Son of Herbert Palmer, the poet and critic; in the intelligence section of the D.L.I.; in civil life a schoolmaster.

BRIXHAM HARBOUR

THE brown fishing-boat slips homeward
Over the pock-marked cheek of the sea,
A streamer of white gulls behind her
Waving and brilliant in the sun.

Into the harbour she swings,
Cutting smoothly towards us,
A chevron of spray at her prow's blade
And small waves diamonded about her.

A final turn as she touches the quay's wall,
The flung ropes and the tossed voices,
The baskets two-men-hauled and heaved empty,
The deep trolley wet with sliding fish.

CLIVE SANSOM.

NOSTALGIA

WHEN the sun went, we stayed ; close to the ground
we drew our coil, binding the blankets round
as he was folded in his darkening fleece.

One man lay in darkness, thinking of light,
of lighted shops, and firelight, and slippered leisure,
the rosy mist of early winter night ;
the glistening streets ; each unconsidered pleasure of busy and idle peace.

To and fro in the darkness like a dog
His soul goes breathing after smells of home.

Finding only the smell of thorns and tares
cleansed by the puritan wind, slinks home again,
inwards and down to the cellars of the brain,
noses the door, blinks at the dropping stairs.

Black darkness meets him, embraces him, escorts him
downwards, down to the lowest, thickly supports him
against sideglancing fears. Here live the fires
of pure resentment, unashamed desires,
which billow up by night to take on shapes but dare not ask for words.

He knows them well, touches them furtively,
as an old miser fingers poisonous jewels
that open glittering mouths, from their dark bellies
croaking obeisance to their secret lord.

Wordless, they whisper to him : drop the sword,
take up the book ; from self-begetting strife
the mind can save itself, if it dissolve
liaison with the common strict resolve.

What shall it profit a man if he save the world and lose his life ?

Sleep comes fast. Lest she should find him here
He runs to meet her, knowing she will say :
No more of this self-stimulated sorrow,
no more excursions down the dormant ways.

There must be work, and talk, and prompt response and a cheerful
face to-morrow.

Libya, Winter, 1942-3.

IN MEMORIAM FOR ONE KILLED IN LIBYA

I WAS one of those who went
to live and die in Africa.
And here, when all had passed, I stayed behind.

Lest I grow cold,
the fierce sun at mid-day,
the hot sand, and forever
the dust shall be my covering.
Lest I be hot,
the frozen lips of night
shall breathe the bitter wind
across my bones. The wind,
the sun, no more.

And I would have it so ; a life
is not enough. Live twenty times
And outgrow language ; even then, the desert . . . . . .

The desert speaks
in the beating of tent-flaps,
a wild beat, pausing
fitfully with the vague wind.
The desert writes
its history in tiny trails,
delicate marks in sand,
stories of dim lizards
and black scorpions.

But when the deep wall of the sandstorm moves,
Whirled in brown darkness, I shall move, and know
The distant secret dunes as I knew London.
I shall see manless valleys ; withered wells
And barren hills shall teach me, as my friends,
The lonely sturdy music of their names.

Libya, 1942.

GUSTAV LINE

MONTE Camino claps his thunderous hands,
He hears death singing high above the river.
The lightfoot echoes fleeing from the gun
Stir in his tumbled limbs a moment shiver.

His pain is past ; he listens ; death curves down,
Down on to Monte Mais, whose grey sons
In shapes of apathy and fear and pride
Shield her encouragement against the guns.

Austere Sammucro, placid Cesima,
Whose wounds are cleansed by gales and dressed with snow,
Breathe in the smoke of ancient jealousies
Coiling from broken villages below.

Italy, February, 1944. K. J. Dover.

SONG

O FORTUNE is no bird to sing
Tame and obedient to command ;
Eluding net and confident hand,
She mocks me on contemptuous wing.

No cunning lure of mine can bring
Her, bright-eyed, to my fingers and
Teach her the cradle of my hand.

She flies. I follow, wearying
Of the long road ; the empty land
Darkens until alone I stand
With how few feathers for my gathering !

Brian Hill.

Four Poems by Maurice Burke, Major R.A.:

SPRINGTIDE IN AN ENGLISH WOOD

HERE in this vaulted pleasaunce adolescent Spring
Cavorts in Sunday bib-and-tucker, hued
Of palest pinks and callow greens,
Footing it in silence on the mossy carpet's pile . . .
A silence stressed in echoed birdsong and the yelp
Of terriers on a scurrying rabbit's trail.

The memory stirs to thoughts of Picardy
Where woodlands even such as this
Stood naked-peeled and riven
By hurricanes of shot and shell,
Were carpeted with bloated dead,
The air an unseen fog of putrifaction . . .
For there mephitic War had wallowed swinelike,
Rooting and grunting at his will.

How other here . . . ! How far away
The reek of battle here
Where this so English Spring holds elfin riot
And mocks report . . . prompting the vibrant shout:
There was no Delville wood,
There is no Anzio Beach-head!

TO THE WIND

MARAUDING dragon, whose sacrilegious claw
Unfrocks the tonsured Autumn with a laugh
Ribald and raucous, whose voracious maw
Engulfs whole woodlands, riving oaks in half,
Plays havoc with complacent sea and loch
Dismasting stricken craft with wanton art,
Whose tyrant voice and monstrous bellow mock
The tenderness deep-lurking in your heart . . .
Will you, whose fragrant-laden breath I loved
By Summer casement and in garden fair
Or on the sunlit slope where once we roved,
Will you, failing at length to find me there,
Enlace the echoes with your grief and rave,
Ruffling the fell of grass upon my grave?

SALVO

BOANERGES . . . Sons of Thunder . . . Ready!
Wait upon the word,
The word tense, tenor-toned and plangent: *Fire!*
Unleashed in hot resentment then
Let slip your steely hound-dogs six
In full cry up the aerial slope . . .
The while your acrid reek
Stings eye and winged nostril . . .
And in the Valley of Decision

Thrust home in staggered advent
Your implacable revenge.

Thump . . . Bang . . . Crump . . . Crash
With *Rive* and *Rip*, your hound-dogs six
Give tongue and whet their jagged fangs
In the Valley of Decision at the kill . . .
What though in glutting their fierce appetites
They turn to iron tears of pity and remorse
Anent the crime within the crime
Self-mirrored endlessly :
It is decreed,
Boanerges, Sons of Thunder,
It is *The Cause*.

SABLES

IF my son went felon . . .
I would shun the sunlight,
Hang sables on my door,
Shut my casement to birdsong,
Turn from the morning rose,
Avoiding the mullioned tavern where
Genial souls acclaim my advent,
Go solitary in weedy lanes . . .
If my son went felon.

I would plug my hearing
'Gainst soaring flute and shimmering violin,
Bend only blindness on
Cloud shadows giving chase
Along the flanks of summer hills,
Deny my palate savour
Of choicest cates,
Withhold caress . . . and deeply grieve
For my son gone felon.

But I am childless . . .
And yet I sit
In sables and in ashes :
For a world of men at war.

MAURICE BURKE.

ARTHURIANS, 1944

(For Flying Officer Douglas Stuartson-Bell, D.F.C., R.A.F.)

THEY shall not pass who ride, remorselessly
Beneath the jewel-cold stars, above our prayers,
With song and jest, in errantry apart,
Sounding a hymnal chord that shall sing on
Into the hearts and souls of men unborn.

They shall not pass from Thought or be erazed
From Time, who ride the steel-blue skies this night !

They shall not pass.
Flown from the pierced hands of God, that rigid fell
All bruised and bloody from their half-hewn task,
They caught the steel.
Thus armed, they cut the last satanic thongs,
And, laughing, strike their chord into Eternity.

A. EDWARD FARMER.

TO THE LITTLE BLACK GIRL

O NIGGER girl, whose damson skin
Darkness himself would nestle in
And with a Moorish passion seek
To gather muscats from your cheek;

How wan and sickly must we seem
To you—as phantoms of a dream
Whose blood and muscle fade away
Before the elements of day.

Rollicking moon and rolling star
Your trim and wakeful guardians are,
And look, how humbly weeps the rose
Because in red and white she goes!

Nor shade of hers will ever be
So well-beloved as ebony—
Has not her poet already fled
To sing a black and woolly head?

O nigger girl, elusive, gay,
Walking in Wimpole Street to-day
You stole my favour and my pen:
Pray let me have them back again!

SONG

THE shell, the nightingale, the rose—
No miracle more lovely is
Than these whose vagrant beauty goes
Uncaptured down the centuries.

For many a tale of love and death
Brown lads will sing and poets tell,
Yet none shall build in bone or breath
The nightingale, the rose, the shell.

When all familiar things have fled
And Faith herself begins to fail,
See, leaping from the restless Dead
The rose, the shell, the nightingale!

TROUT

DELICATE, shuddering fish,
I can think of nothing more beautiful
Than yourself, elusively moving
Through the parted lips of the water.

The rushes welcome your body
With soft, inquisitive fingers
Moulding the bone, the sinew,
As a lover knows his beloved.

And the heart of the river, pounding
Drowsily like a tiger,

Rumples the wave in a flower
Petal over your shoulder.

Tremulous, quivering fish,
Nibbling the lilting ripple:
There is no star nor music
So lovely as your shadow.

SONG FOR DEATH

DEATH, old warrior
Hobbling coolly
In between the flowers-O
And the green barley,

Where have you laid him
That was so fair
Star and snow and nightingale
Entangled in his hair?

The hoar frost tightens
Whip, thong and leather
Round the secret primrose
And the lad together;

Mole in his quiet palm
Dips a naked finger—
Fears no more the rolling gait
Nor the brave singer,

And over his blood, his brain,
Soughs heaven—high
The forlorn curlew
With its sad cry.

JEAN KENWARD.

REVEILLE

BE silent now: for him to-day
Discord and harmony are dumb;
The choristers that sing these words
Are Death's shrill fife and muffled drum.
The strings, the brass, all music's way
Responded once to his caress,
But here an orchestra of birds
Will not desert his loneliness.
The pageant of his past goes by—
Their feet tramp out a rhythmed tread—
Hark! Now the trumpets throw their cry
"Come home! Come home!" to his dark bed,
And then for all that music's sake
They call again "Awake! Awake!"

CYNTHIA PALMER.

So much to do;
So little time to do it.

WHO uttered this
With his final breath
Was giving perhaps
The cause of his death.

But God forbid
When I come to die
That my last words
Should be that lie.

So little to do
And so much time
Where the task in hand
Is the task sublime:

The keeping open
Of Jacob's stair
With the soft incessant
Light of prayer.

Syracuse University, N.Y.

A. E. JOHNSON.

THE WORD

In the beginning was the Word . . . .

WHAT is the Word—this poet, this subtle power
That framed the reckless lyrics of the earth
In characters of stone and leaf and flower;
Whose laughter lightens all dark paths from birth
To our reluctant passing; who from a seed
Impels the flowing epic of a tree;
Who takes a fragile wing, a slender reed,
Or shell, as symbols for pure artistry,
And sets the echoes in a human skull
To flourish; who will perversely intersperse
The blatant ugly with the beautiful,
Translate creation in immortal verse
Then scrawl a jesting limerick upon it?
Are these disorders of a lovely mind
Striving with life to form the perfect sonnet,
Or gestures of god, improvident and blind?

What is the Word—made flesh in flaming rose,
Concealed within the wild anemone?
The perfume of a petal? The graceful pose
Of natural things in sheer felicity?
Is it the force that breathes a million buds
To life, but one brief hour to dance; the hand
That scooped the foaming sea to form of clouds
Those proud cathedrals on the borderland
Of wonder.
Somewhere there must be mind
Which lit this candle in the void of time;
But when progenitors of humankind
By some great urge, first clambered out of slime
And claimed dominion over all the earth,
They found a cactus in the soil of truth.

What is the Word—transcending time and space?
Untrammelled by man's tolling clocks, it tramples
On our quietude until we blindly pace
Traditional paths of faith, and build new temples
To the gods our fathers praised; or, rejecting all
We cultivate our gardens and ignore
The paradox.
Behind the cloistral wall
Of self the hermits delve, but they explore
The unknown hinterlands of heart and brain
Only to find misanthropist with lover,
Mild pacifist kissing the hand of Cain,
Sage and harlequin consorting there—discover
Serpent and Christ in one identity.
Shall we then harness thought, let ardent youth
Go riding, striding the mountains; or shall we
Play the Pilate, wash our hands of truth?

I, too, have raised persistent question in the schools
Of life. I, too, have loitered in God's open meadows.

Once I searched the woods at midnight, caught dream shadows
Dancing with the moon by crystal-silver pools.
Each phantom swiftly passed from human sight
Yet one remained, one lovely firefly dancer,
To murmur words no memory could forget,
However still :
"We may not grant the light.
Man cannot purchase visions at his will—
Only by constant seeking . . . The answer
Is not yet."
And vanished into deeper night
Leaving only tangled moonbeams in my track,
Pale flames aglimmer on the mirror-pools,
And flaunted echo of the leaves . . . "not yet . . .
. . . yet."
Regretfully, I wandered back
To join the world's dream-haunted fools.

HOWARD SERGEANT.

ENGLISH EARTH

BRITAIN lies in the palm of my April hand . . .
Grey London earth, of errant Wealden slag,
Cremated leaf, dead lovers' dust, blown sand,
And Uther's son perched on the Cornish crag.

Do you remember, on the heels of the Legions
Your journey north, your tryst with virgin land,
Your gold thrust up to feed young Caesar's sons,
And Arthur, falconned, in Broceliande ?

Tall Richard, penoncelled and kingly fair,
Leading his troops by Thames-side to the sea,
In a white cloud of fervour ? You were there.
And Guinevere bent to her tapestry.

Do you remember, ash of many men,
Elizabeth, Greenwich, and a fleet a-sail ?
You were the majesty that glittered then.
And Lancelot buckled in his coat of mail.

Have you forgotten, but a day ago,
The Corsican and his loud Frankish stir ?
You were the gunpowder at Waterloo.
Now to Tintagel comes Excalibur.

Slide from my hand, good dust—you leap again,
You would blow East where springs not spirits fail :
You will be English roses to tired men :
You will blow back about another Grail.

WRENNE JARMAN.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

(A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION)

AUGUST the 7th is the third anniversary of a great man's death—the Indian poet and philosopher, Rabindranath Tagore. One New Year's morning, eighteen years ago, I visited him at Shantiniketan—"The Abode of Peace," which he had established in Bengal. This International University in the depths of the country was the crystallisation of a dream. With its library of Eastern manuscripts (many written on dried Palmyra leaves and tied together in long, narrow bundles), its pillared porticos, its crescent-shaped stone seats set under the trees where the Gurus could conduct their classes in the open-air, as did Socrates in Athens ; its music school of ancient Indian instruments ; its agricultural settlement for training villagers in modern scientific methods ; its communal dining-hall where caste was purposely ignored, and its European guest-house, it was the expression of a many-sided personality. It presented a creative ideal—diversity of interests but a common aim : to learn the best of what East and West had to offer, and in the light of both cultures to find a middle way of understanding.

This was perhaps the inner core of Tagore's teaching. Proud as he was of India's ancient heritage and steeped in her tradition, his horizon extended far beyond the boundaries of nationalism. His writings, translated by himself into glowing English, built a bridge over the bickerings and misunderstandings of politicians across which kindred spirits from either side might pass and commune with each other.

I remember that morning vividly. I had recently arrived in India and, though I had a letter of introduction from a mutual acquaintance, I had no official reason to visit the poet, and represented nobody but myself, yet he welcomed me with outstretched hands, as though I were a long-awaited guest. It brought home to me the instinctive courtesy of the East.

We talked for a time about his writings and I mentioned how, on my bookshelves at home, I kept his poems next to those of W. B. Yeats, as there seemed to me a strong kinship between them. I did not know, until he told me, that it was the great Irish poet who first encouraged him to translate and publish his work in English.

Beautiful as these translations are, I had been told by Indian friends that they could not compare in lyricism with the original Bengali ; so, greatly daring, I asked him if he would read me one of his poems in his own tongue. He consented and, telling me the meaning of it first, launched into the most remarkable exhibition of vocal orchestration I have ever heard from the lips—or rather lungs—of one man. The poem was about children playing on the sea-shore. His voice had in it the surge of the sea, yet was as full of delicate inflections as a string orchestra. While it lasted I was transported to other worlds, and came down with a bump when his voice ceased.

It is still a singing memory : the tall, white-bearded figure in a flowing Persian robe, the hot glare on the ground outside, the cool shadows within the wide-eaved bungalow, and the poet's voice an orchestra in itself.

To Rabindranath Tagore, ugliness and evil were synonymous. The industrial areas of Europe and America which he visited on his travels left him profoundly depressed. He had no use for the "modern proficiency which cripples men for the sake of methods and machines." "True modernism" he would say "is freedom of mind not slavery of taste." "Man in his fulness is not powerful but perfect ; therefore to turn him into mere power is to curtail his soul." What a gospel for to-day ! And again : "Beauty is the signature which the Creator stamps upon his works when He is satisfied with them." There is an echo of St. Joan in "God's words are ever ringing in the world and he who is wilfully deaf cannot hear them." (The Dauphin,

you may remember, asked "Why don't the voices come to me ? I am King, not you," and Joan replied, "They do come to you, but you do not hear them.")

Rabindranath Tagore heard them. Yet with the humility of the great, and a delicious touch of humour, he paints a memorable picture of man's struggle to escape from his own lower self.

> Who is this that follows me ?
> He makes the dust to rise from the earth with his swagger.
> He adds his loud voice to every word that I utter.
> He is my own little self, my Lord, he knows no shame, but I
> am ashamed to come to thy door in his company.

M. H. Noel-Paton.

WAKING IN THE COUNTRY

When I wake up, my curtain drawn,
And see the daisy snow on the lawn,
And hear the silvery pigeon note,
And the golden song from the thrush's throat,
I am a child of five again,
There are no problems for my brain,
My heart has never heard of pain—
When I wake up, and there the dawn
Is a diamond drop on bud and thorn.
Then quick before my clouds return
Life's tedious lesson I unlearn.
I fling away my senseless story :
Stepping outside time's twilit mazes
Into a world of light and daisies,
I with the dewdrops chant again
Earth's tiny and tremendous glory.

Beatrice Mayor.

IN her green
World Proserpine
Tells of wonders she has seen.

In this abandoned world above
Only the madman talks of love
And stupid marksmen shoot the dove.

The poet in the market place
Has seen love's beauty face to face
But no one heeds nor slackens pace.

The rebel and the poet cry
To those who'd let all beauty die,
But people pass unheeding by.

In her green
World Proserpine
Tells of wonders she has seen.

A Miner. John B. Pick.

MEMORIAL TO A POET

FOR ever 'twas ordained that he shall toil
And dream, and toil again, and dream till Death
Shall find him in her twilight at her gates,
And lift him, soiled, within ; and kiss and lie
Beside his soul in a new light of stars.
And all that in him was of beauteousness
Shall be incredible to men, and he
Shall pass away as something unbelieved.
So was he sent, divinely, unto you,
To do you the service of song, and lo !
It is even with him as a rare bloom
Bespoken in the watches of the night,
And ere ye came 'twas nothing but report.

These lines from his poem, "The Service of Song," exemplify the conception of the poet's destiny held by my friend, K. C. Spiers, whose recent and sudden death at Brighton, has brought rest to his proud and troubled spirit. He was born sixty-four years ago in Liverpool, where his father, author of several books, was, for over twenty years, the literary, art and dramatic critic of *The Liverpool Daily Post*.

Very few young poets have blossomed with such promise of radiant maturity as that indicated in the reviews of my friend's verse by qualified critics of the day. Such tributes abound as the following : "We have here a true poet whose work is worth watching, even as it will be impossible to forget."—(A.W. in the *News Chronicle*) ; "It is so seldom that one meets with a real poet in these crowded and prosaic days and I am filled with assurance and delight ; assurance that the muse of poetry has not yet forsaken her preferred and ancient English haunts ; delight in Mr. Spiers's great and glowing gifts."—(Rev. T. A. Sykes, in *Great Thoughts*.)

Much of Spiers' verse was published in the literary magazines, including *The Fortnightly Review* and THE POETRY REVIEW. Some of it also appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Standard* and other London newspapers. Four volumes of his selected poems were published by Chapman and Hall and other firms.

Why was the promise of his poems, nearly all written between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five, not fulfilled ? The answer is the inevitable one when the question concerns a poet compelled, for the greater part of his life, to toil at an uncongenial task in order to provide subsistence for his family and himself. For over forty years my brother-in-law was a journalist and he actually died "in harness" some twenty minutes after having a heart attack in the office of a provincial newspaper.

The fact that much of his journalistic work was associated with such grim and sordid routines as crime-reporting and accounts of inquests fed his feeling of frustration until he became a professed cynic, convinced that fate had conspired to muffle his muse and bitterly resentful of such treatment. And thus, while the daily grind of sensational reporting developed him into a highly-skilled journalist, it killed the poet in him. So much so that for very many years he could not bear to hear the slightest allusion to his poetry. Even the names he gave his beloved daughters reflected something of this reaction. The first was christened Veronica, after the heroine of one of his longer poems ; the second was named after his favourite Shakespearean heroine, Juliet ; and to the youngest he gave the beautiful but pagan name of Athene.

But the few who both loved and understood him knew that this embittered man of frail physique had an ardent and lofty soul. Knew, too, that because his income had been reduced to less than half its value by the war, the domestic expenditure he had sternly set himself to maintain imposed such self-sacrifices that, in his later years,

he often went without what some people would regard as the common necessities of life. For nearly a year during the worst period of the "blitz," when he had assisted his family to evacuate to the country, he lived the life of a recluse in a large London house, with only a sympathetic black cat for company. Nearly every night the house was shaken by the explosion of bombs which fell all around and some of which killed residents in the same road. Had he been what is called a "matey" man he would probably have sought comfort from human proximity, but he preferred to face the nightly terror alone, rather than make new social contacts. Paradoxically, his rigid sense of responsibility impelled him to serve as a voluntary warden one night a week, and it was the same impulse which induced him to befriend a distressed Irish labourer whom he met one "hectic" night in a public shelter. The man was to be married in the morning, but had been so upset by the raids that he had omitted to procure a "best man." Said Spiers, "I'll be your best man!" And in this capacity he officiated when the wedding took place next day in a Catholic church in the vicinity.

He admitted to me that he went through hell during those terrible autumn and winter months in which the reaction on an imaginative mind was much more disturbing than it could have been on one that was conventionally stolid. But always, after a sleepless and exhausting night, would he return promptly to his daytime task with the determination to devote all the resources of his tired brain to producing good "copy." And some of it was very good copy indeed, for, as his surviving colleagues on the staff of the great London paper on which he served for twenty-five years can bear witness, whenever he was required to write an article which permitted literary treatment, his prose was exquisite.

Despite his professed cynicism he had a sincere belief in spiritual values and I never heard him sneer at religion. Although a very irregular churchgoer, he loved the pageantry and ornate service of the Catholic faith and it is, therefore, appropriate that he should have been laid to rest in the family grave in the Catholic Cemetery at Mortlake.

And now, his earthly travail ended, it remains for us to recall, in these privileged pages, a few of the gems from the wealth of imaginative imagery he has left to enrich the poetry of his generation.

LANGFORD REED.

THE POEMS OF K. C. SPIERS

(Some Extracts)

From "To the Fallen":

O thou unlaurelled heroes of thy land,
Nameless and loved neglected and yet loved,
Unasking, uncomplaining, dutiful,
Beneath that burning barrenness of blue
And deep beneath that wounded mother-earth
Plunged in a premature forgetful grave—
Farewell—
No power can now reward thee but thy God;
For we are weak to speak of thee
And impotent to crown.
The dawns are His, the sunsets, and the stars;
Would they were ours to cast upon thy graves
To name thee to eternity!
But He will love thee, He who loves thee now,
Whose angels minister to thee;

And in the coming time with healing years
The land shall smile again where thou art dead,
Shall smile again in mellowness and peace,
And be thy monument.

[NOTE.—*The above was written more than forty years ago in reference to the South African War, but is "prophetically" applicable to the present world-conflict.*]

From "To Autumn" :

O Banqueter and feaster at a feast
Of fallen fruitages in fading hall,
Pour on this soul, as on thy woods, fair priest,
A vintage that shall evermore enthrall ;
Pour on this restless soul, to dreams released,
A draught beyond Life's cunning to recall.

O elfin lutanist of faery Falls,
Who blow thy music into muted light,
Scroll with lit-taper leaves thy russet walls,
And sing to me of Death far in the night ;
Note with lit-taper leaves thy many calls,
That I the awful magic may recite.

From "Conquest" :

Tell me not, love, that I am fair,
And that no woman's eyes
With mine compare ;
Hold me not in thy fond arms' lair
And temporize.

But as thou hast a lion's might,
Bring me thy journey's prize,
When falls the night ;
'Twere easier then, in that love light,
To idolize.

Or, forge me words that kings obey
And nations, hearing rise
To nobler sway ;
'Tis thus that love lives on for aye,
Or, lacking, dies.

From "Watch-Night" (A Prothalamium) :

The bridegroom cometh ?
The bridegroom cometh ?
Yea ! yea ! the bridegroom cometh ; it is he
Thou comest with the day who are my day,
Thou comest with the wakefulness of birds,
Thou comest with the light'ning of the leaves,
Thou comest with the quick'ning of the world ;
Brightening, loudening, warming on to me.
Thy coming is bepearled with the dews,

The morn-wind sings behind thee in thy train ;
The coming years are gorgeous in thy suit,
I see thee with my eyes and with my heart,
I who have waited, long, my love, for thee—
So let us haste and meet him on the way,
I in my bridals and my flowers and joy,
And beat your cymbals, ring your bells, and sing,
And strew the way with roses and with musk—
O mother, sweetest mother, mother mine,
Give me thy blessing ; kiss me on the lips.
My heart is loud with prayer—Look at the east !
The day hath broke the sluices of the night,
And comes cascading o'er the stars,
Paving with pearl the channels of the dawn.
This is my wedding day !

The bridegroom cometh,
The bridegroom cometh !

From "Lyrics" :

O bury me deep on the wild, wild shore,
Where the waves shall roll o'er my heart evermore,
This wild, wild heart that the murmuring deep
Alone of all lovers can rock into sleep !

O bury me deep on the wild, wild shore,
Where the waves shall roll o'er my heart evermore :
There at last shall its passion return with the tide,
Return to the West, and its murmuring bride !

From "To H.S." :

Peace be thy heritage and Love thy dower,
The daylight robe and bless and comfort thee,
And midnight o'er thy soul a monstrance be,
In dreams to guard thee from a starless hour !
And heed not, sister, the world's praise or blame :
Go thou thy way, consoling and consoled,
A whisperer of joy where pain is old,
A beauty-bringer and a fragrant name.

THE SONG OF THE SEA

ALL the night long
A great voice thro' the darkness calls,
Calls in its might—
Singing its sempiternal song ;
And on my ear its thund'rous rhythm falls,
Neutral, impersonal, passionless, without spite,
Great as the world, and spacious ages long,
Out in the void, alone, singing the Almighty's song,
All the night long !

Montreal, Canada. CHRISTINE L. HENDERSON.

WHEN

(Lines to a Poet)

WHEN your spirit has known the exhilaration of the birds,
And your lips have responded with the vigour of the rising sap—

When you have moved with the freedom of the whirlwind,
And bowed with the obedience of the whipped grass—

When you have burrowed deftly as the mole,
And climbed with the sure feet of the chamois—

When you have compassed the loneliness of the unconquered mountain,
And fathomed the friendliness of a fertile valley—

When you have been as great a lover as the sun,
And yet shared the austere chastity of a glacier—

When you have faced your task as fervently as a water-spring,
And measured the level of achievement as unerringly as its torrent—

When you have served joy with the recklessness of a butterfly,
And kept house as providently as a squirrel—

When you have been shod with the endurance of granite,
And worn the ballet-skirt of the thistledown—

When you have displayed the artistic adaptability of a cloud,
And your judgment has been refined to the clarity of a diamond—

When your voice has vibrated with the thunder,
And attuned itself to the perfume of the rose—

When you have surmounted difficulties with the inspiration of a lotus,
And sustained your argument with the dignity of its balance—

When you have judged beauty by the loveliness of a nest,
And appraised that nest by the wealth of the wings it will cradle—

When you have toiled with the insistence of the wave,
And spent yourself with the carelessness of its spray—

When your mind has counted the particles of sand
As readily as your heel has trodden upon them—

When you have been as sensitive as an oyster,
And adorned with pearl the house of your suffering—

When you have given shelter as tolerantly as a tree,
And accepted it as gracefully as a fern—

When you have lived in two worlds as manifestly as the dragon-fly,
And guarded, like him, the memory of your first estate—

When you have thought as individually as a carrier-pigeon,
And communally as the migrating swallow—

When you have examined those thoughts with the insight of radium,
And knelt at the altar of conversion cloistered in the atom—

When you have designed your phrases with the economy of a honeycomb,
And adapted form with the perception of a lily—

When your imagination has been as colourful as the rainbow,
And shown the selective discernment of a buttercup—

When you have prophesied as infallibly as the field-mouse,
And reacted to atmosphere as readily as a bee—

When you have combined the spontaneity of the lamb
With the mature reserve of the tortoise—

When you have expressed yourself with the versatility of a snowflake,
And adhered to Truth with the single-mindedness of a limpet—

When you have captured the rhythm of a coral-reef,
And carved a Temple with the chisel of a daisy—

When you have reconciled the apparent rigidity of the pine
With the wayward lilt of its young branches—

When you have sought Light as faithfully as a flower,
And diffused it as daringly as a petal—

When you have looked down with the patience of a stalactite,
And reared your head, with crocus-courage, to the Stars—

When your tongue has released the revolutionary fire of your veins,
And your hands have dispensed forgiveness with the healing fingers of a plant—

When your heart has warmed to the heart-beat of the earth,
And your arms have embraced the magnetism of its love—

When you have felt the burning wrath of Vesuvius,
The power of Niagara, and the mercy of Jordan,

And, in the light of these, have gauged the Heart of Ruth,
And the Soul of Job, and the Mind of Solomon, and the Strength of Samson,

Then, knowing something of the meaning of the First Commandment,
And of the Second, that is "like unto it,"

You may, perhaps, write a poem worthy of the Creator,
In Whose image you were fashioned—Whose Law is Love!

ROBERTA SHUTTLEWORTH.

NOTES (showing the trend of thought and part of the implication of the words)

"And your lips have responded with the vigour of the rising sap."

It is said that if we could hear down to one vibration per second the noise of the rising sap and opening leaves in a growing forest would be deafening.

The upward urge of a small weed will crack an asphalt pavement, yet it rises against the force of gravity.

"When you have been as great a lover as the sun."

The sun gives out three hundred million tons of light a minute, yet it would take millions and millions of years to use up an appreciable part of its weight.

"When you have served beauty with the recklessness of a butterfly."

"A butterfly is the most ethereal of living things, as variously coloured as the rainbow . . . As the object of the poet, so Flecker used to argue, is to produce beauty, the butterfly seems to be made solely to delight the eye. The colours are just gorgeous, like the fish in the Southern Pacific, because nature is lavish of colour for her own aesthetic amusement . . . That so lovely and delicately wrought a thing should possess such inner strength is not a little surprising. The seductively shaped wings with the orange spot that dash out into the first sunshine of spring may be unruffled, undimmed, though they rested with no other defence than an ivy leaf throughout the rough winter." The Monarch butterfly will travel 1,000 miles.

"And your judgment has been refined to the clarity of a diamond."

The diamond is one of the three stones in the second row of the Breastplate of Judgment—Exodus XXVIII, verse 18. Perhaps this is because it is formed from charcoal (burnt bones and wood—an element present throughout the whole of the animal and vegetable kingdom) by enormous pressure in heat and, therefore, suggests purification by judgment or sacrifice. It had its name from the Greek interpretation, which is "an unconquer'd virtue."

Every man of eleven stone is carrying about with him twenty pounds of carbon, enough to make a bigger diamond than any yet recorded.

The diamond has perfect transparency and very high powers of refracting and dispersing Light.

It yields to no sort of matter, neither fire nor iron, but it does yield (at a high temperature) to the purifying "Breath of Life"—oxygen—and becomes graphite, yet more striking differences than exist between these two can scarcely be imagined—differences which evidently bear relation to the way in which the atoms of carbon are arraged to build up the crystal structure. Is not the vital marriage of form and content also the pre-occupation of the poet, and does not the achievement of the diamond bear close analogy to his aspiration ? See *A Key to Precious Stones,* L. J. Spencer.

"And attuned itself to the perfume of the rose."

The rose is the symbol of Divine Love.

"The fragrance of flowers may indeed be described as their music . . . In every scented flower and leaf the perfume is exhaled by substances so perfectly blended as to give the impression of a single scent just as several notes make a chord."—*The Scented Garden,* Eleanour Sinclair Rohde.

"When you have surmounted difficulties with the inspiration of a lotus."

In the stem of the water-lily is a spiral coil which gives it power to rise and sink so that it is always above the pressure in which it lives and facing the life-giving sun.

"When your mind has counted the particles of sand."

It is suggested that in relation to the whole universe our earth is equivalent to a millionth part of one grain of sand in relation to all the grains of sand.

"When you have been as sensitive as an oyster."

The inner surface of the shell of the pearl oyster yields mother-of-pearl, and distinct pearls are secretions due to external irritation. The largest pearl yet found—the Beresford-Hope pearl—weighed 1,800 grains—over six times the weight of the oyster that produced it.

"When you have lived in two worlds as manifestly as the dragon-fly
And guarded, like him, the memory of your first estate."

The dragon-fly emerges from an under-water grub that feeds in the slime of the river. It may be seen hovering over sheets of water.

"When you have examined those thoughts with the insight of radium."

Radium emits invisible rays that penetrate opaque matter. A diamond—the hardest of all stones—turns emerald green by proximity to radium.

"And knelt at the altar of conversion cloistered in the atom."

The splitting of the atom would result in the transmutation of one substance into another, as was done when hydrogen was transmuted into helium. It is stated by Averil Gornold that the text "We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye . . .", I Cor. XV, has now become scientifically comprehensible to human understanding and could be effected by transmutation of the blood, caused by rays emanating from the Presence of the Son of God—the Light of the world—and the mortal body could become immortal so rapidly that there need be no interruption in the moment's activity. It could also be caused by rays from the sun in its "seven-fold light"—Isaiah XXX, verse 26.

"When you have designed your phrases with the economy of a honeycomb."

Mathematicians have proved that the shape of the honeycomb is the perfect expression of economy plus efficiency—the minimum of wax and labour to hold the maximum concentration of essential loveliness. The hive-bee's cell is hexagonal. This again stresses the significance of the relation of form and content.

"And adapted form with the perception of a lily."

The lily—the symbol of Purity—is also hexagonal (see Madonna Lily and Lilium Regale). The hexagon bears special relation to the circle—the circle of the earth and the emblem of Eternity—because each side of the true hexagon is the radius of the invisible circle that encloses it, and lines drawn from the centre to each point at which the hexagon touches the circle form six equilateral triangles or perfect Pyramids. "It is He that sitteth upon the Circle of the earth." (Isaiah XL, verse 22). The compass is divided into 360 degrees (the hexagon multiplied by itself gives 36) and 360 is a cycle or Hebrew "time" by which the seven times punishment may be counted. 360 is also the number of days in the year by lunar calculation. 666 is the number of the Beast (Rev. XIII, verse 18), yet all are bounded by the circle. 6 is also the number of the days of Creation.

"When your imagination has been as colourful as the rainbow."

The rainbow displays the several prismatic colours of the spectrum.

"And shown the selective discernment of a buttercup."

Every flower is provided with selective tissues by which it draws from the sun's rays the particular colour in which it expresses its glory.

"When you have prophesied as infallibly as the field-mouse."

The field-mouse has been noticed to cover up its hole prior to the setting-in of cold weather.

"And reacted to atmosphere as readily as a bee."

Bees are very sensitive to atmospheric changes. Working bees are said to hurry home if a cloud obscures the sun.

"When you have expressed yourself with the versatility of a snowflake."

"No two snow crystals have ever been found to be alike, yet each one is a perfect hexagonal form."—*The Radio Times,* Feb. 12th, 1943.

"When you have captured the rhythm of a coral-reef."

"Unlike cornfields, whose ripening heads bend all together to the same breeze, neighbouring clumps of weed, swayed by opposing currents, change and counter-change their direction, achieving a rhythm more subtle than the choreography of any ballet" (description of a coral-reef).—*Blue Angels and Whales,* Robert Gibbings.

"And carved a Temple with the chisel of a daisy."

It is computed that if a daisy—the symbol of Innocence—were formed to the same scale as St. Paul's Cathedral it would take two years to explore its crannies, *i.e.* given the eyesight of microscopic power to see its marvels.

"When you have looked down with the patience of a stalactite."

A stalactite takes about four thousand years to grow one inch. (Official information from Cheddar Caves).

"And reared your head, with crocus-courage, to the Stars."

The sun is one of the smaller stars which form our island universe. All the stars may be regarded as suns of greatly varying size. Sirius—the Dog-Star—is four times heavier than our sun. Antares has a diameter 450 times that of our sun. It is computed that about two million other island universes can be seen by astronomers, each consisting of several million stars.—F. E. Butler, *Signpost to the Stars.*

Light from our sun reaches the earth in eight minutes, light from the nearest star takes four-and-a-half years and light from the Pole Star 450 years.

"When your tongue has released the revolutionary fire of your veins."

The ferments found in plants and animals are extremely powerful forces of combustion and purification and, in some cases, one enzyme can affect what is a million times its own weight without any loss of activity.

"And dispensed forgiveness with the healing fingers of a plant."

Not only does the beauty of a plant dispense spiritual healing, but, from earliest recorded times, its veins have dispensed bodily healing. The Sumerian Herbal was in existence in the second half of the third millenium, B.C.—See *The Divine Origin of the Craft of the Herbalist,* by Sir Wallace Budge (formerly Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum), also *The Truth about Herbs,* by Mrs. C. Leyel.

"And your arms have embraced the magnetism of its love."

The steel needle of the compass points always to the magnetic meridian, and mariners steer their course by the guidance of this invisible power.

The Biblical references for the last three verses are Mark XII, verses 30 and 31 ; Genesis I, verses 26 and 27.

MY FIRST SONNET

"Till polish'd wit more lasting charms disclose,
And judgment fix the darts which beauty throws."—SHERIDAN

THIS is to be my first-born sonnet fair.
Upon this snow-white paper I must trace
The lines that constitute her lovely face,
That, first, will blush at Critic's ardent stare,
Till, of her worth made speedily aware,
He falls a victim to her wit and grace.
My pen, while moving at its proper pace,
Her half-length has achieved of beauty rare.
Within these next six lines, her shapely limbs
Must now be drawn, her picture to complete,
That he, who o'er the sheet but quickly skims,
May note her classic form and perfect feet.
Now, from her page, on all she sweetly beams,
My sonnet-maid, the daughter of my dreams.

July 27th, 1943. HOWARD PARSONS.

From a P.o.W. Camp in Germany.

TO MY WIFE

THESE things I surely know
Of growth and reawakening;
The wax-bright cup of the crocus
The flung heels of the young lamb
The sticky bud on chestnut tree
Arrow speed of swallow flying
And fragile green of young corn.
So weak these are—Yet I
Can hear them laughing strong,
With new Spring's foreknown gaiety
Mocking tyrant Winter's bonds.

As surely do I know a greater thing
Held captive now, nor ever was weak.
Winter keeps this too, and Force
Guards it close with wire thorns
Grown on bramble tangles.
Yet laughs as loud in my quiet heart
My love, and mocks these present bonds.

F/Lt. F. Harvey Vivian.

CHEAP STREET, FROME

THE gables of the ancient shops appear
As rows of pointed teeth, secure and old,
Fronting the sky. The streamlet, fast and clear,
As with a spell the time-worn stones enfold.
Here every yawning door and jutting wall
Seems harbouring a ghost of bygone days,
Whose name is shrouded by the ash tree tall
That guards the paths which make the churchyard maze.
Thus is the past commingled with the noise
Of friendly gossip in this place to-day,
For modern skill has not despoiled this heap,
And present wares seem but the changing toys
That hold for one short hour a fragile sway,
Ere men, like children, with their toys seek sleep.

T. Pittaway.

Lydia Dean (Cordoba, Argentine Republic) sends this tribute to John Keats:

A spider's web's a thing of beauty,
But not a joy forever.
It lives one perfect moment,
And then, the threads dissever.

Such was his web of life,
A glory and a wonder,
Till the dews of Death descended,
And broke the threads asunder.

WAR POETRY FROM OCCUPIED HOLLAND

[*We have the great privilege of publishing a remarkable selection of the chronicle and testimony in verse of the war-ravaged Netherlands, presented in English by C. M. MacInnes, of Bristol, with an introduction by Mr. E. Jansen, of the Netherlands Government Information Bureau.*]

PREFACE by His Excellency M. G. Bolkestein, Netherlands Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences:

Non bis in idem. And therefore no introduction by me is necessary since Mr. Jansen has done this splendidly below. One of the most soul-destroying results of war, particularly of this total war, is the great damage it inflicts on the human personality, which the psychologist calls "limitation of consciousness": the contraction of human thoughts and feelings within the narrow circle of material war. He who understands this can better realise the truth of one of the deepest and most illuminating thoughts ever given utterance: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul."

Of those things which can pierce the limitations of consciousness art is amongst the greatest, in whatever form she may appear; art leads man temporarily into another world. But having arrived there, however, the sensitive man may reproach himself for having escaped into an unreal world, more remote than ever from the world of reality. This conflict is sublimated when art itself deals with war; at least when it is art which sublimates human misery. He who accepts this view will best know how to appreciate this collection of "War Poems." And he who loves the Dutch people will realise with gladness that even to-day, in the words of the introduction, "it is in lyrical poetry that the Dutch spirit finds its richest flowering."

London, March, 1944. G. Bolkestein.

HOLLAND to-day is cut off from the world and hardly any of the poems which follow are of the year 1943. The poems of previous years could reach us still, though circumstances were gradually tightened and no names at all of any of the poets have been given.

When speaking in foreign countries about Dutch art one is expected to speak about Dutch painting. Only those who are well acquainted with Dutch life and culture and the Dutch language know about Dutch literature. And it would be shallow to deny that not in literature but in painting Holland has found its highest expression. Rembrandt stands for Holland as Shakespeare for Britain. But in mentioning these names we know that both their communities have not spoken once through one personality only and not only to one special epoch.

Calling Britain thus the country outstanding in literature and preserving for Holland its place in painting no mistake should, of course, be made through simplification or too much generalisation. Holland has had its dramatists, authors and poets, though in the greater scope of the world's judgment they may not have been of gigantic stature. And recalling now the greatness especially of two branches of its painting: the portraits and the interior, it will not surprise anybody that not drama, neither prose or epic poetry, but that it is in lyrical poetry that the Dutch spirit finds its richest flowering. This community of individualists, often distant and uncommunicative, always united, however, when the highest was threatened and at stake, has used the lyric to express itself in poetic form. Throughout the centuries of its existence lyrical poetry has accompanied Holland in times of greatness and difficulties, of slackness and rebirth, inspiring, attacking or mirroring its spirit. Our poets from generation to generation have handed one another the torch. In struggle and fight

and friendship, in understanding and misunderstanding as poets and poets' schools—when really alive—should do. They have voiced the will of the community they represent, its misery, joy and innermost life and they more often than the leaders of the various other sections of the community, the political, religious and economic, have been aware of things to come. Our Dutch poets did not fail in this their duty in the days before and during this terrible war which has befallen the world and is sorely trying our country and our Empire. It may therefore be understood that under the heading "War Poetry from Occupied Holland" we include a choice out of the poems of the years preceding this war and the occupation. Because from a time counted by years (Dies Irae, 1937) till 1939 this war loomed over the poets' consciousness and they found the power and the words of expression. Each in his way, but all lucid and brave and daring in a world crazy with appeasement.

. . . . . .

A ship left Bordeaux for Britain in June, 1940. It was torpedoed overnight, and except for one woman and a few of the crew the passengers and sailors—most of them Dutch—were drowned, and amongst them Henny Marsman, Holland's greatest young poet, in his thirties still. The woman saved was his wife. The first poem and the last are his. He had complained in *Homesickness* (1922) "we were born centuries and centuries too late," and he who would have loved to be a warrior was condemned merely to tell the story of bygone ages and to sing the song of crusades and cathedrals in centuries past. For Marsman the true source of Holland's culture and indeed of Europe's culture was to be sought in the Mediterranean world. *Dies Irae* of 1937 gives the clear presentiment of the cultural disaster which overhung Europe. The poet knew.

Marsman, however, was not the only one who pondered upon the spirit of his time. And did the poet "drive the nails into his hands in woe" without foresight when walking through the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam after the German pogrom of 1938? These years give their ghastly answer.

Queen Wilhelmina, that head and heart of our nation, the unquestioned leader of our people, both in good and bad days, made her statement after her arrival in London: "At this immensely grave moment," she said, "in the history of mankind, black, silent night has settled on yet another corner of this earth . . . . . oppressed, threatened, watched on every side by a power that would tear out all hope from the soul of man, the unhappy people of Holland can but pray in the silence of their heavy hearts." Is not one of the first poems to reach the outside world in 1940 the moving versification nearly of these words of bravely-faced wisdom? "In the Beginning was the Word . . ."; how great and imposing just these words at the moment when the enemy tried to cut off Holland from the world and the people from their innermost soul. "This Land" was written after the invasion of Holland in the Netherland East Indies in 1941 before the Japanese attack.

The tragedy of Rotterdam will be remembered a thousand years from now. The Rotterdam poems were written after the disaster and it is not by chance that in each of them the same thought recurs that her "spirit will prevail."

"The Unknown Soldier" is remarkable for the thought of representing the mass, but being lonely in it. How great a faith in the strength of the individual is hidden in these verses. "That Morning" was written after the first general revolt over Holland, which was quelled, as so many afterwards; "The Great Bear" was written in a concentration camp and smuggled out; "Carillon" is the work of a young woman, previously unknown. All the sadness and strength of Holland, how moving it is expressed in the playing of the bells, that extremely Dutch singing of the towers.

"The Sea" is one of the last poems Marsman wrote "before," as one of the poets of occupied Holland wrote in December, 1942, "the sea rustled over him as over the other one (Shelley), who was like him, inspired and enchanted, and who, before the stream of the sea carried him towards the coast, sang of the lark and clouds and the wind from the west."

I may not finish without declaring the humbleness of my own task between the poets of occupied Holland and Mr. MacInnes who, in devotion and understanding born by so great a trust in his own country and Empire, understood the innermost voice coming from neighbouring Holland, cut off, but so near to him in spirit.

E. JANSEN.

. . . . . .

My friend, Mr. Jansen, translated these poems into literal English and it has been my task to attempt to put them into metrical form. With the exception of the sonnets, in which I have allowed myself some latitude, I have tried to follow the metre and the rhyme scheme of the Dutch originals. To translate poetry, in my opinion, is probably an impossible task and I prefer to think of the following verses as renderings rather than translations. Although in consequence of my effort Dutch poetry has become rather indifferent English verse, I hope, that enough of the Dutch poets' thought remains to make clear to the people of this country how our brave friends and allies, who have suffered so much, but whose spirit is unconquerable, are feeling at the present time.

C. M. MACINNES.

DIES IRAE

FORCED by the base ignoble code
Of this bleak God-deserted day,
We go with beasts along our road
Who gloat on us their future prey.

A brutish life in holes we lead
Through this long night of soot and rain
Which echoes with loud howls of greed
From beasts who whine for flesh again.

Two camps behold one horde primeval,
Its lust for blood no surfeit knows
Causing man unmeasured evil
While swift away his life-blood flows.

We rage in vain, we have no power
Alone against hell's might to vie—
May flames reduce this Babel tower
To dust beneath the blackened sky.

Oh when will light these clouds break through
One narrow gleam of hope no more;
She needs no grand and distant view
To make her radiant as before.

Grant us a light, send but one star
To shine into these noisome dens,
Then we shall know those regions are
In sunlight still beyond the fens.

POGROM

IS that the waning moon's uncertain gleam,
Or veiled by clouds of smoke a face I see ?
Where can Berlin and Grenadierstreet be ?
—Did the boy fly hearing the gangsters' scream ?

Stands there his ghost upon the bank ? I dream !
Did this river his spirit slowly free ?
Is this Grenadierstreet, is that the Spree ?
—'Tis Amsterdam, and that the Amstelstream.

On Rembrandtsplein streetlamps begin to glow,
Fountains of sparkling light on rooftops rain . . . .
—I drive the nails into my hands in woe.

Through Jodenbreestraat's deep ravine I go ;
My shadow dancing on the walls shows plain . . . .
—Berlin from here is but ten hours by train.

1938.

Rembrandtsplein—Amsterdam's Piccadilly Circus.
Jodenbreestraat—Main street in old Jewish quarter.

MARCH OF THE DEAD

I GO into this street with dread,
Where still the ruins smoulder red.
Those gables totter in the wind
With tongues of flames lit up behind,
And cast a cruel mocking light
On household gear exposed to sight.
Those who daily took and gave
Found in this street a common grave ;
The work of heart and hand and brain
Here ruined lies and mocks the slain.

To the embankment now I go—
Those burnt-out ships no longer glow ;
Our ancient water-way I see
Bears blood and soot down to the sea.
Upon the bridge Death stands on guard,
A stiff black shadow, cold and hard—
Brothers he felt no stab of pain
When you marched by, a ghostly train :
Left, right.

When through rebuilded streets I pass,
New wood and stone and steel and glass,
And when our town once more is made
The home of sailor men and trade,
And on these ashes others do
The work so lately done by you,
Then, when the moon is new I know
Along these streets your ghosts will go :
Left, right.

1940.

"IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD . . . ."

BUT what if words are altered quite,
And change of shade in each is wrought . . . .
We see them there in black and white,
But seeing we believe them not.

Like birds' egg shells all hollow blown,
The playthings of the hooligan
So words like these have empty grown.
. . . . The plunder'd bird can scream . . . but man

Alone by words makes known to men
His deepest need, his thought, his dread.
If words have lost their sense what then
When the real thought in them is dead ?

Brother what can I say to you
When words contrary meanings bear ?
My silent heart is stifled too
Entangled in this verbal snare.

1940.

THIS LAND

TO these Indies, our land, come never near !
From jungle we have carved an Empire proud,
We Indonesians who the *sawahs ploughed,
We Netherlanders who the towns have made
And cut the roads through deep primeval shade,
And we Chinese who traded here since grey
Antiquity, one people bound to-day
By love more strong for homes and kindred here
Than those beyond the sea we still revere,
To these Indies, our land, come never near.

To these Indies, our land, come never near !
We made it ours by toil of heart and hand,
Though sever'd now it is from that far strand
Where once a Queen smiled on us from her throne
And guided us her children not yet grown :
But as fond mothers oft times can foresee
Their children reaching full maturity
So with bright eyes she sees our future clear,
To these Indies, our land, come never near.

**sawahs*—paddy fields, rice fields.

THE POET IN WAR-TIME

MORE of my work you may from me desire
Because so often in the bygone days
My song has won from you cold words of praise—
But times like these do not such verse inspire.

You must admit we flounder deep in mire
To-day. I cannot hide that with each phrase
And rhyme I make, my meaning further strays
From what I wish to write in words of fire.

But moral standards are not changed by rhymes
Nor in a world at war can beauty dwell,
And when you know these things ask not again

For gentle verse conceived in kinder times—
Henceforth my glowing lines will seek to tell
The sordid truth and pierce your heart with pain.

1940.

BOMBERS FLYING OVERHEAD

LITTLE of planes we earthbound people know,
Nor of the cold up there this winter night,
Or skies wherein the waning stars still glow
Above a land doomed to a terror-flight.

For when the heavy-coated pilots go
Their way, secure and warm behind the glass,
The beauty of the stars recalls a show
Of flowers in spring, seen waving in the grass.

How strange their lives appear to us on earth,
Bound as we are by common-place affairs,
Our ev'ning meal, this room, that blazing hearth,
The clock's slow tick and all our household cares.

With deep-voiced engines' roar they go
Echoing through infinity of space,
Over a soundless sea that lies below
And land which now in darkness shrouds its face.

Rivers they see reflect the cold moonbeam,
As on their way they steer across the sky,
While one by one the searchlights cease to gleam
As though they say to them : "Dear friends, good-bye."

They see their bombs explode, but feel no hate ;
When shells about them burst they twist and climb,
Pursued by hesitating lights of fate
Through all that awfulness of space and time.

They dedicate their lives to ruin's work,
Yet sometimes feel like us a haunting dread,
Fierce contradictions in their souls that lurk
Wrestle like children tossing in one bed.

Now that the bombs are gone the plane feels light,
And like a clockwork toy drones in their hand,
If Death's cold beach sends them no call to-night,
In safety they will reach their fatherland.

1942.

ROTTERDAM SEEN FROM THE VIADUCT

YOUR wounds are deep but still our town we know
Oh tortured Rotterdam!
Pillaged and burnt and naked you lie there.
Defaced and maimed, light of our life more fair
Than broken statues seen to-day on show
Fashioned by artists centuries ago.

Of flying dust you made a silver veil
To hide your death-pale face and haunted eyes,
And those torn limbs that stir the heart to pity.
All you once were, illustrious city,
You'll be again: in one harmonious tale
Your past and future blend this fair sunrise.

A smile is on those lips blackened with fire,
Heroic Rotterdam!
Like yours the laughter of those martyrs old,
Whose glory ancient chroniclers have told,
Their dying eyes saw God upon the pyre
With hands outstretched to save them from the flames.

Oh karyatid of our ancient state,
Symbol to-day of a war-torn world's distress.
You'll bear your load once more, nor feel the strain,
Your stone-built palaces will stand again,
And from blue distances with their rich freight
Hither the fleets of all the world will press.

September, 1940.

THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

THE seasons hurry past with sun and rain,
And on my grave a thousand blooms are laid,
With May sad hearts return to me again
To mourn their dead with homage to me paid.

My son will search for me, but will not find,
And when his shadow falls across my grave
Silence will spread. The years will leave behind
No thought of me in him, or what I gave.

To cure my wound was past the healer's art,
No balm of love could for such pain atone,
A keener dread than death was in my heart,
That I should lie remember'd but unknown.

The standards dip and children's steps draw near,
Glad May brings joy that fled when autumn came,
But none will whisper: "Son, your sire lies here,
Fighting for you he died, honour his name."

July, 1941.

AN INCIDENT

THE bombs came down, a ghastly rain,
Three children more were orphans made,
Their mother's sewing now displayed
A dark and self-declaring stain.

Since then it is a treasure rare,
With gentle touch sometimes to feel.
Her coffin—cheap Norwegian deal!
The makers had no oak to spare.

1942.

THE LAST LETTER

WE heard lark's song and the glad voice of spring,
Asleep upon his coat a soldier lay,
In dreams he smiled, we knew his heart was gay
Hearing perhaps peace bells begin to ring.

It was no bell of peace, no bird the thing
That fell upon the sun-warmed grass of May—
But he slept on and we stood pondering,
That grass turned red left us no word to say.

Then came the wind and cold remorseless rain,
While far beyond the verge of that grey plain
The guns in joyous mood began to speak once more.

He never stirred and fallen from his coat
A page we saw and the last words he wrote:
"Dearest, we have not yet begun this war."

1940.

THE BIRD

A SMALL wild bird has perched upon my hand,
Uncertain whether he should rest or fly,
"So you have come to soothe my grief," I cry,
"How rare to-day is joy in Netherland—

Where ashes are houses were meant to stand
And foemen's tents proclaim our slavery,
The cross on that far hill seems mockery;
Can I like you, sweet bird, glad song command?"

Out through my open casement now he's gone
Above the elms and churchyard path below,
In liberty he flies, unreckoning

How blest he is, that white and shining thing.
To-night in dreams that liberty I'll know,
And so I may begin anew at dawn.

October, 1940.

THAT MORNING . . . .

I SAW that street at break of day,
And dark bloodstains on every side:
Behind the barricades they lay
Those strong young men who there had died.

How brave they stood at set of sun,
But long before the night was gone
Death sergeant laid them one by one
With staring eyes that saw no dawn.

A small placard typed plain to see
Upon a pillar gave each name,
Strangers no more they were to me,
The Unknown Soldier they became.

For one there was I'd seen before,
Reservist subaltern he died,
Of late I'd seen him pass my door
With wife and children by his side.

This one remember'd soldier's face
Personified that gallant band,
As once I'd seen him for a space
In my sad heart he'll always stand

1941.

WAGGONER WITHERWARD

SOFTLY the twilight spreads in a cold sky
Above the stifling town, no planes as yet!
Deep silence reigns till midnight passes by.
It falls each night the hour the sun has set.
Terror comes when the cruel moon rides high.

This seeming calm will free no soul from fear,
False cloak of an immeasurable woe,
See there a spectral waggon now draws near,
A shadow moving in a shadow-show—
The waggon stops, the driver's voice I hear.

That long and narrow wooden coach with tight,
Pulled-down and dirty grizzled canvas hood,
Bears a crude cross of red that in this light
Seems roughly painted there in stiffened blood—
Listen! Somewhere a shot rings in the night.

Now as I hasten from that driver's view,
His team he rouses and moves on again
With that mysterious load that gave no clue . . . .
And yet, oh Man nailed to the Cross, 'twas plain,
For when the churchyard road he sought, I knew.

November, 1940.

THE SONG OF THE EIGHTEEN DEAD

A CELL two metres long for me,
But not two metres wide,
That plot of earth will smaller be
Whose whereabouts they hide ;
But there unknown my rest I'll take,
My comrades with me slain,
Eighteen strong men saw morning break—
We'll see no dawn again.

Oh bright and lovely land farewell !
Farewell free dunes and shore !
I vow that from the hour you fell
I thought of ease no more.
What can a loyal man and true,
At such a time essay,
But bid his wife and child adieu
And fight the useless fray ?

Hard was my task, my duty stern,
It brought me toil and strife,
But yet my heart would never turn
Back to my easy life.
Freedom was once in Netherland
Both honoured and maintained,
Until the savage spoiler's hand
Its dwelling place profan'd.

Until that lying boastful one
Lengthened his tale of shame
When Netherland was overrun
And we his serfs became.
Honour he claims, but knows it not,
He glories in our grief
And sorrows on our people brought
That false germanic thief.

Berlin's Pied Piper pipes a tune
Seductive, false and sweet,
But sure as death is coming soon,
My love no more I'll greet,
Nor ever sup with her again,
Nor by her side will lie—
His seeming kindnesses disdain :
That fowler cruel and sly.

Remember always, you who read,
These friends who with me die,
Kinsmen and all for whom we bleed,
Keep green our memory.
As we have seen in days now gone
This word to you we say :
"The darkest night precedes the dawn,
All clouds must pass away."

The early light of morning see
Gleams through that window high,
Dying, oh God, a light make me,
My failures justify.
All men will err though they may plan ;
Thy mercy, Lord, I pray
That I may quit the world a man
Before the squad to-day.

[*The author was shot by the Germans for underground activity.*]

THE FORSAKEN EMMAUSWANDERER

I SEARCHED throughout the world, what now remains ?
Deserts I trod and crowded city lanes—

No star in Bethlehem ! An empty stall !
And naught is left but vinegar and gall.

Foot-sore I am and dark the way I go,
False yielding slush, no more the firm clean snow.

From empty stall to empty grave I pass,
But find no Risen Lord like Cleopas.

Francis, to you the speech of birds is plain,
I seek to read the human face in vain.

I hear no message from the stars, no voice
That makes the mountains and the vales rejoice.

No angel's song for me on my dark road
That I may chant to ease me of my load.

1940.

THE FIRST SIGNAL

THE last high ridge of dunes shows clear
In sunlight swathed, defiant, bright,
And this free wind that now blows here
Fears not that wrong will conquer right.

The yellow beach, that outer bound
Of conquered land is scarce in view
From this poor inn where I have found
Good cheer, and loyal hearts and true.

Beyond barbed wire, you stretch, oh sea,
And mock our present griefs and pains,
You know what things are yet to be
When we have cast away our chains.

That carbine gleam proclaims our fate
That still the Hun holds us in fee—
For that first signal here we wait
By this high dune above the sea.

1943.

WILD NOTES

YOU are the hunters! We the prey!
The guns are in your hands to-day.
You set the snare, the pack you train
That hounds us forward dumb with pain
To where in violent mood you wait
Your lust for blood to satiate.

Haunted by threats we go at night—
Behind us steals a stealthy tread
That makes us long for dawn, but light
And darkness both are charged with dread—
Last battle come! Our victory!

Though weak and broken we may be,
Through Europe soon our hunt will go,
And though you twist and turn you know
Death comes in the avenger's hand.
Unite sad folk of every land,
The hour of vengeance will proclaim
Our present huntsmen are the game.

1943.

CARILLON

THE people in the streets are grave,
I see distress and shoulders bowed—
They listen! and a sudden wave
Of joy sweeps through the silent crowd.

For in that lofty belfry there
The great bronze bell no longer sways
That sent the hour through street and square,
The master of the bells now plays.

*Valerius: our fathers knew
That solemn hymn the deep bass plays,
With lighter trebles sparkling through:
"Unto the Lord I lift my gaze."

One of the many there I stand
Press'd by the crowd against the wall,
While songs of my sad, ravaged land
Its glorious past to me recall.

List'ning in silence we remain
While Holland's light shines from above.
What I have lost I'll not regain—
And bitter, bitter is my love.

August, 1941.

**Valerius*—Composer of famous Dutch hymns and songs in the time of the national struggle for liberation against Spain (end of 16th century).

AN OLD-TIME LIBERAL

AN old-time Liberal indeed was he!
In winter-time with open coat he'd go
To prove his right, and merely said, "Quite so,"
When I declared the frost bites bitterly.

To Church on Sundays he would come to see
What kind the preacher was: he was the foe
Of ritual—his Church, he said, was low,
And High Church rites to him were flummery.

He was a very perfect Liberal
Whose kind to-day in Holland cannot dwell,
(For better or for worse let others say).

In times like these there is no middle way,
Crushed down by ideologies they fell
And feuds of State and Church and Capital.

1941.

THE GREAT BEAR

O SEVEN shining stars 'tis thus you seem
To men, the generations come and go
But at the time ordained each night we know
Amid the stars you drive your stately team.

When lovers tire of kissing and they deem
Their joy too full, they pause to whisper low :
"See the Great Bear his wagon guide," and so
Beheld through bars the prisoner may dream

Of dead-still worlds o constellation,
In which no rage or youthful joy is seen :
What care you for pain or jubilation ?

On those who weep and those who kiss you shine
The same, nothing disturbs your calm serene,
Would that my soul could know that peace divine.

1942.

TO THE GEESE

AS at my window late I dream to-night
I hear above me in the darkened sky
These unseen echelons of geese whose cry
Comes faint, then grows and dies, passing in flight—

Now in the darkness summer's sound unite
To fill this tranquil hour with mystery,
And haze has veiled the stars fair majesty
As sleeps the earth unmindful of Man's plight.

Oh free wild birds that now fly overhead
Your broad wings you at last will fold in peace
In lands where men in liberty still dwell.

Of our great misery the story tell
And how we here, from whom all joy has fled
Envy the freedom of migrating geese.

1941.

THE FLAME

SMALLER the world becomes day after day,
Smaller the island wherein we now dwell,
Smaller the number of loved ones as well—
Day after day.

Deeper the gaps in our ranks are each day,
Darker and sadder our thoughts as we plan,
Little henceforward we look for in man;
Old and all faded the bright ones will grow—

I think of myself and fain would I know
If decay and the years took something from me,
Something that I in life's springtime would be:
A flame that consumes and yet never burns low—
Day after day.

1941.

THE SEA

HE that would write the spirit of this sea
Should know, or not begin, the moonstone rock
Stands here that holds when floods engulf the world,
And culture like Atlantis sinks from view;
Alone beat here the wings of light that touch
The far horizons of three continents
That give our song reflected lights and shades
The ivory's sheen and black of ebony,
And mixes in our cup the roses' scent
With the ecstatic essence of the grape.
Here trembling night saw Dionysian ships
Rove from the Pillars to the Hellespont,
And from the Damascene coast to Etna;
High welled the fountains here
That threw rainbows upon the coasts
Of temple, mosque and Cross.
The heart has listened here to that sweet voice
Odysseus heard and so was tempted sore
And words great Solon spoke at Athens once—
Amidst the breakers of this inland sea
Foundered the pride of Rome and Babylon.

While Europe lives, and bleeding still can dream
That fair brave dream that from a dead cold Cross
Grew once the living vine, so long will fountains spring
And the creative spirit still will move
Upon the ageless face of this fair sea.

1939.

This collection of poignant poems will be made no less pertinent and arresting—a valuable contribution to war-time literature—by the glorious news as we go belatedly to press that Holland is no longer "occupied".

THE RAINBOW ARCH

WHEN, in his latest book[1], Professor G. Wilson Knight speaks of Timon of Athens as

> the soul of great poetry voyaging on a lonely quest, most truly at home with sun and moon and earth and all elements of nature . . . (who) from the depths of eternity pronounces judgment on the pettiness of man (p. 51)

he defines very clearly the nature and function of great poetry, which elsewhere in the book he calls "the only true wisdom" (p. 100).

Since the outbreak of war, Professor Knight's two Shakespearian studies[2] and the study of Milton[3] have been concerned with one urgent theme: the re-awakening of the national imagination (for "where there is no imagination the people, sooner or later, perish," p. 101), and this, he affirms, can only be done through a comprehensive understanding of poetry's sovereign function: what poetry is, what it could, and should, do, and affect every aspect of life, every spring of action. This can best be realised through a closer attention, first to Shakespeare, England's supreme and indeed the world's greatest, poet, and then to Milton, and to all England's mighty hierarchy of poets. There seems little doubt that he finds in England's magnificent poetic tradition the justification for his deep faith in the nation's ultimate destiny. Certainly it is hard to think that a country which has bred and nourished such greatness could ultimately fail to achieve a noble destiny, no matter how grave the immediate retrogressions and mistakes[4].

Beginning with a short chapter on "Our English Heritage," Mr. Knight traces the development in the plays relevant to his theme (therefore all but omitting the comedies), from the histories to the tragedies, and on to the final plays, "The Tempest," and the play in which Shakespeare ends his life-work, "Henry VIII, "this great play . . . Shakespeare's crowning achievement" (p. 76), which, he says, is "no mere historical pageant: but far nearer a prophetic document" (p. 77) and is "alone among the histories . . . a play of peace throughout."

The early histories are definitely war-like, although, as Mr. Knight points out, "Shakespeare knows, well enough, the un-Christian nature of war" (p. 14) (in which case, incidentally, even the genius of Shakespeare must have been taxed to create a "Christian warrior" [(p. 29) in King Henry V!]. It is noteworthy that one of Shakespeare's latest and most mature plays, "Timon of Athens," is full of violent imprecations of war, which suggests that, just as Tolstoy in his early thirties could write *War and Peace*, conscious, as Shakespeare clearly was in the histories, of the horrors, and even sin, of war, but not as yet seized by the conviction that possessed him when he witnessed an execution that "he understood *with his whole being* that no theory . . . could justify this deed," so Shakespeare, in his later years, experienced a somewhat similar revulsion, which first found expression in the violent denunciations of Timon, and later moved on to the calmer, and therefore still more profound, understanding which produced the "play of peace throughout," "Henry VIII." In "Timon of

[1] *The Olive and the Sword:* A Study of England's Shakespeare. (Humphrey Milford. The Oxford University Press, 1944, 6s.)

[2] *This Sceptred Isle* (Blackwell, 1940) and *The Olive and the Sword* (1944).

[3] *Chariot of Wrath* (Faber and Faber, 1942).

[4] On these premises we may see infinite hope for the future of Germany, the country which bred not only the world's greatest musicians, but also the creator of "Faust" and a noble company of very great poets. Mr. Bridges Adams, in his recent essay on "The British Theatre," comments on the truth that "Art knows no frontiers." The vital importance of this no artist can afford to forget even for a moment. If art were true to itself and if artists the world over were to recognise the supra-national nature of art, they would go far towards restoring unity and peace in a stricken world.

Athens" the romanticising of war, so marked in the earlier plays, has no place at all, and it is fairly certain no Shakespeare will arise in this age to glorify the latest form of warfare, bombing from the air, which lacks even the thrill of aerial combat, since those attacked have, in the very nature of things, no possible means of defence or counter-attack, which by the rules of any game would be considered unfair. In the 1914-18 war, air warfare was confined almost exclusively to the battle-areas, and the young airmen certainly found the "dog-fights" grand sport. But there can scarcely be a thrill in the act of releasing a bomb-lever, when there is not even the satisfaction of seeing what has happened as a result, and all possibility of human contact with the adversary is excluded. Twentieth-century warfare has moved far from the wars of history of which Shakespeare wrote.

Mr. Knight is careful to point out throughout his book that "The greater plays . . make, of course, statements far outpacing any national assertion" (p. 41), and that

> "the poet is not content with military or national values alone, but remains deeply concerned with them, and henceforth submits each and all to a penetrating criticism, showing them in contrast, or collaboration, with greater, and mysterious, presences" (p. 43).

This is pre-eminently the poet's function, and if poets, and indeed all artists, were always true to their function, if they were to understand the nature and responsibility of their great mission (which is always concerned with the awakening of man to his deeper and greater self, to, in Mr. Knight's words, "the dignity of human personality"[1], and a realisation of his own selfhood), then they would inevitably command the recognition, and hence respect, which is their due. But so long as the artist allows himself to be distracted and diverted from his life's work, so long as he submits implicitly, even if not explicitly, to the judgments of the Philistine, fails to recognise the real meaning of his calling, and fails to accept the role of a man dedicated as solemnly as the priest is dedicated, so long will he remain no more than a voice—and a feeble one—crying in the wilderness. It can well be argued that for the decline of the imagination in the modern world and the resultant disasters—which are ultimately wholly due to an imagination so deadened that it has almost ceased to exist—the artists themselves are more to blame than the public, for they have by no means remained true to their calling, have compromised and assumed, for the most part, a somewhat shame-faced attitude, especially in England, where, since the development of the industrial era, art has been quite subsidiary to commercial interests, and the intimidation of the artist has been almost complete[2].

In *The Olive and the Sword,* as in many of his other studies, there is a powerful insistence on the Crown symbol, which, because so recurrent throughout Professor Knight's work, must be carefully pondered, since it clearly has a profound and vitally important significance. Here, on p. 16, he explains that "the Crown symbolises the nation's soul-life, *which is also the greater self of each subject*"[3]. This is, of course, no less a poetic than a Christian conception; both poetry and Christianity are concerned with the realisation of personality and its essential sanctity. Again,

[1] In the essay "The Shakespearian Integrity" in *The Burning Oracle* (Oxford University Press, 1939).

[2] In an article "Music and the English Mind" (*Sunday Times,* May 14th, 1944), Mr. Ernest Newman noted that on one occasion a learned judge enquired of Sir Thomas Beecham, "What is the good of music?"; on another occasion a young man having said that he was studying music was asked "Why doesn't he go into some honest trade?" And a coroner at a recent inquest remarked that "the young man was evidently not normal; he spent his time writing poetry." Similarly, a youth in the Army was recently sent to a psychiatrist because he had affirmed that his chief interest in life was poetry.

[3] The italics are mine.

> "The Crown is a dynamic and inexhaustible symbol, piercing into realms of the infinite and eternal; it shadows more even than a 'destiny,' touching that high otherness and its purposes *for which the nation exists on earth*; and 'God save the King' asks something even vaster and deeper than national preservation" (p. 95).

The purpose for which the nation exists is the only service which is perfect freedom. Wolsey in "King Henry VIII" laments:

> Had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal
> I serv'd my king . . .

Wolsey is typical of the world which has served, and continues to serve, lesser values, never seeking *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, not understanding the true purpose of every nation's, and every man's, existence.

Again, close attention should be given to Shakespeare's statements concerning peace-making, for "pity is constituent to Shakespeare's sense of greatness in man or nation" (p. 72).

> Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?
> Draw near them then in being merciful.—"Titus Andronicus I", i.

And in "Cymbeline" the conclusion to the warfare is "a Roman and a British ensign waving friendly together."

> . . . Never was a war did cease,
> Ere bloody hands were wash'd, with such a peace.—(V, v.)

A "victory" imposing harsh terms on the vanquished can never bring enduring peace, nor should it. The "divinity that shapes our ends" will not reward evil with good results, and ultimately the soul of a nation is revealed most truly in its peace-making, while the ultimately great nation is the one that will guide the world "into the way of peace," not through ruthlessness, but through the Christian way of generosity and mercy. Without such qualities, no nation should dare to call itself Christian.

Finally, as Mr. Knight points out, there is infinite hope for the world's future in Shakespeare's message, for he

> "speaks to nations beyond the Empire . . . and . . . since his work has already 'set a girdle round about the world' to encompass . . . the whole of civilisation, it may be felt now as a rainbow arch above the flooding fields of war, promising, in the lovely phrases of the sonnets, 'olives of endless age' to mankind" (p. 88).

Romantic Realism

In a long article on Mr. Francis Berry's poetry in The Poetry Review[1], Professor Wilson Knight said that

> ". . . the fusion of contemporary realism and cosmic vastness under the aegis of Christian *power* is of all possible endeavours the most prophetically significant for us."

Mr. Berry has now published a book of poems[3], in which the long titular poem is seen to have a tremendous contemporary significance, which cannot possibly have been *foreseen* at the time of writing (1938-39), and may therefore be regarded as prophetic (the gift of prophecy being at one time recognised as an inevitable prerogative of the poet[2]).

The poem begins with the statement "The heavy Church is on the ground" (earth-bound, not "heavenly"). There can be no sun-life, no true Christ-life, until the Church, symbolised by the Tower, is "down." So Edmund, the protagonist in

[1] *A New Romanticism*, May-June, 1941.
[2] *Fall of a Tower* (The Fortune Press, 1944, 5s.)
[3] Cf. *Poetry and Prophecy*, N. K. Chadwick (Cambridge University Press, 1942)

the drama, proceeds to blow up the Tower. This destruction recalls Nietzsche's words in *Thus spake Zarathustra:*

> Oh, behold the tabernacles builded by these priests!
> Churches call they their sweetly perfumed dens!
> Oh, this adulterated light, this musty air! This place
> Where the soul is *hindered* in its upward flight!

> And not until the open heavens shine again through broken rafters and upon grass and red poppy that groweth by broken walls, shall my heart turn again to the place of this God—(*Everyman Edition,* pp. 81, 82).

And now we learn that over 14,000 churches have been destroyed in air-raids in England alone. The thought immediately arises: is the destruction perhaps necessary, a prelude to a rebirth of the pure Christianity which has existed only sporadically, and been understood only rarely[1], since the time of Constantine? Was Nietzsche right, was "Edmund" right, in his belief that there can be no live, sun-warmed, rich religion until the Church, *as it has been known for sixteen hundred years,* has been destroyed? Is it in fact the Church that has hampered true Christian power? There seems little doubt that the failure of organised religion can be held directly responsible for the immense tragedy of our age[2]. There is no doubt at all that there is a grave weakness, and that there will have to be widespread and radical changes before Christianity is *free* to play the vital life-giving part it must if humanity is to be saved from total destruction. Already many thinkers are distinguishing between Christianity and "Churchianity," and the destruction of the churches in air-raids may ultimately prove more an aesthetic than a spiritual loss. It may be that they symbolise the kind of Christianity that must be swept away if true Christianity is to be liberated. Meanwhile, "the open heavens shine again through broken rafters," and the grass and red poppy reveal God more directly than many of the images and ecclesiastical paraphernalia designed and wrought by man. As yet, it is only possible to conjecture as to the ultimate meaning of the universal destruction.

In his previous long poem, *The Iron Christ*[3], Mr. Berry foreshadowed the development of a dynamic Christianity, "the Christ-making *from guns* . . . expressive of regeneration with power,"[4] and though it is questionable whether *as poetry* the poem "Fall of a Tower" quite fulfils the promise of earlier work, the subject-matter is clearly of vital importance and interest. Some of the shorter poems in the book, notably "The Devil," "To—," "Evidence of Scienter," "Cremation" and "Nocturne," release the magic of pure poetry more perfectly:

> Helen is on the walls of Troy,
> Among the stars in a blue night
> Is on the towers tiara-jewelled;
>
> The memory of snapping spears and falling metals
> Does not disturb her quiet commune with those stars,
> She, serene though centre of all silent forces,
> . . . . . .

[1] *E.g.* by Kierkegaard and Tolstoy.

[2] One of the highest dignitaries in the Church of England, in a letter to the present writer in March, 1941, said: "I suppose it is arguable that if the Churches 'had stood fearlessly for the Kingdom of Heaven,' war would have been eliminated from Europe."

[3] (Williams and Norgate, 1938)

[4] *A New Romanticism.* The reference is to the manufacture of a Christ-figure from the guns that would have been used in a war between Chile and the Argentine, had the dispute not been settled by arbitration.

She, the Person ever ominous
As a moon in crescent bows towards the ground
To meet the whispers from the workings of the earth
That greyly climb the ramparts (like the wind in oaks).

This in one act disturbs and satisfies, troubling and enchanting the mind with its vividly contrasting pictures and infinite range of suggestion, while "The Devil" is a deeply-moving and *powerful* reconstruction of the Agony in the Garden :

Thud of the cloven hoof
Ominous and dividing.

(About this time
The dying sun shone on his face,
And yet he carried grief with grace
Into that garden.) . . . .

Leaving the garden cedars and the scented laurels,
Drawn and white, yet winged his soul,
(Golden eagle soaring over sparrows' quarrels)—
Crowning the glorious, yet gashing, Whole.

These are lines that, once read, cannot be forgotten. Francis Berry is a poet to watch. The war is stealing many valuable years of productiveness, but even this war cannot last for ever, and it seems certain that he, in "combining contemporary realism with cosmic vastness under the aegis of Christian *power*" will create work of the greatest value, work, indeed, of primary importance in the post-war world. In that confused and questing world there will be every need for poets of indomitable Christian power.

DALLAS KENMARE.

THE CHESTERTON BIOGRAPHY

I was quite surprised that I experienced no kind of disappointment in Maisie Ward's biography of Gilbert Keith Chesterton (Sheed and Ward, 21s.). I was surprised because I expected a much less frank account of his remarkable and brilliant life. The book follows very faithfully the main events of the life of Chesterton. There are the early days, nothing much to distinguish them from the early days of any other child. But at so early an age he had to write poetry ! He is strongly on the side of the true knights, for he writes :

Three thousand Knights
With clamores drawn
And targets tough and strong
Knights who for the right
Would ever fight
And never bear the wrong.

Gilbert (I really *must* call him by the familiar name) goes to St. Paul's School in the commonplace Hammersmith Road. Here, Mrs. Ward tells us, he draws pictures all over his books. Young as he is he wanders into religious poetry. He is just a little pessimistic for he asks, with a rather queer worry for a youth of seventeen, "Yet ne'er the perfect glory came—Lord will it ever come ?"

He spends some time at an art school and begins to unlearn art. How true it all is when Mrs. Ward tells us

> "G.K. liked everybody very much and everything very much. He liked to get wet. He liked to be tired. Each day seemed a special gift : something that might not have been."

So he rushes into verse, for verse is oh ! so kind to him and is in sweet harmony with his mind. He is amazed and humble and asks :

Here lies another day
During which I have had eyes, ears, hands,
And the great world round me.
And with to-morrow begins another.
Why am I allowed two ?

May I answer ? Because, Gilbert, you made such good use of each day.

There is not too much time wasted in preliminaries and Mrs. Ward, as it were, sets off Gilbert on his career, and his career is entirely wound up with his charming love story, his marriage to Frances (her surname was Blogg), indeed, the perfect poem of his life. He thinks about the lady who is to be his future wife, but just at present he has not met her ! Mrs. Ward shows us Gilbert wondering what she is doing. Perhaps she is horribly practical. So he writes a whimsical poem, "Madonna Mia" :

About Her whom I have not yet met.
I wonder what she is doing.
Now, at this sunset hour,
Working, perhaps, or playing, worrying or laughing.
Is she making tea or singing a song
Or writing or praying or reading ?
Is she thoughtful, as I am thoughtful ?
Is she looking out of the window
As I am looking out of the window ?

All his emotions about Frances (I think he proposed to her in St. James' Park, on the bridge) are summed up in the verse that Mrs. Ward rightly describes as his potential "great love poetry" :

God made thee patiently, my sweet,
Out of all stars, He chose a star,
He made it red with sunset bar,
And green with greeting for thy feet,
God made thee mightily, my sweet.

Gilbert is married and he has published some books and is making a name for himself. Here is a whimsical description of Gilbert and Frances going off after the wedding. The book abounds in this pleasant, "homely", kind of writing. I like it for Gilbert was pleasant and "homely".

"Lucien Oldershaw drove ahead to the station with the heavy luggage, put it on the train and waited feverishly. At last the happy couple appeared. Gilbert had felt it necessary to stop on the way in order to drink a glass of milk in one shop, and to buy a revolver with cartridges in another."

Book after book pours out from the Press and Mrs. Ward has all through her book, the opportunity and the grace to say something lucid about the whole progress of the great author. His life leads towards a logical climax and Gilbert is received into the Catholic Church. In "Orthodoxy" he had prepared us for this great step and he sums up the matter in his verse in "The Convert," when he writes :

They rattle reason out through many a sieve
That stores the sand and lets the gold go free
And all these things are less than dust to me
Because my name is Lazarus and I live.

It can hardly be said that in any *real* sense Mrs. Ward's book is critical. It is frank, but in the strict literary sense it is not a critical study of Chesterton. And yet she does let a little criticism "intrude" ! For of Gilbert's admirable portrait of St. Francis, she writes, "only a poet who was more than a poet could see so clearly of

what like St. Francis was." Mrs. Ward cannot quite make up her mind as to the utility of Chesterton as an editor. Did that work rob us of another "The Ballad of the White Horse" or a second "The Everlasting Man" ? I think she believes it did. For my part I am certain we were "robbed" by the editor. How quick at repartee was Gilbert! Bishop Barnes (of Birmingham, he followed Gore) attacked St. Francis of Assissi and said he had fleas. In a brilliant reply Gilbert wrote :

If Brother Francis pardoned Brother Flea.
There still seems need of such strange charity.
Seeing he is, for all his gay goodwill,
Bitten by funny little creatures still.

It was on a dull summer morning in 1936 that I sat alone in Bayswater pondering on some article that had to be written. I looked at the newspaper I had bought idly. I read the words "Death of G. K. Chesterton" and a great part of my world seemed to collapse in a tangled and shattered heap. Eight years have passed since that Monday and Mrs. Ward's *Gilbert Keith Chesterton* has brought back (at least to me) all that Gilbert was, his genius as a poet, his power as a critic, his humour as a humourist, his hospitality, his charm, his gaiety.

In her last years Frances had said often to Dorothy Collins, "Tell Maisie not to talk to me about Gilbert. It makes me cry." So Mrs. Ward in a sense apologises for not giving us even more, than she has, about Chesterton. I think her biography, however, contains just as much as was necessary. It is not perhaps in any sense a "deep" book, but it is a book written into a kind of reasonable homage, frank and artistic. In her hands, Chesterton, at one time President of The Poetry Society, has found a very able biographer and commentator.

When Gilbert died, W. R. Titterton wrote "Gilbert has gone home." Well, if Mrs. Ward has not been able quite to break the silence of his tomb, she has revived all our memories of him, so that at the end of her book I can hear him say, as I heard him say a hundred times : "It has been so jolly to see you" ; and Frances seems to add "You will have to hurry if you are going to catch that train."

Thank you, Mrs. Ward, for your delightful book, and for giving us your pen portrait of Gilbert, of whom once, long years ago, I wrote in a verse :

I sing every day a great song
Of the world and all that is wrong.
I give some hard knocks.
I'm a huge paradox,
But I'm right when the rest are all wrong.

Mrs. Ward has shown us how right he was in nearly all that he wrote, in all that he did. That is the essence of her literary skill. PATRICK BRAYBROOKE.

LETTERS : PLAYS : POEMS

J. B. Yeats—Letters to his Son, W. B. Yeats, and others, edited by Joseph Hone
James Joyce by Henry Levin (Faber and Faber) (Faber and Faber)
Cain by Anne Ridler (P.L. books, Nicholson and Watson)
Christopher Columbus by Louis MacNeice (Faber and Faber)
Poems, 1937-42 by David Gascoyne (P.L. books, Nicholson and Watson)
The Motionless Dancer by Peter Yates (Chatto and Windus)
The Searchlights by Wilfrid Gibson (O.U.P.)
Private Peregrinations by Rita Zena Paneth (Alliance Press)
Poems from the Greek Anthology, translated by Forrest Reid (Faber and Faber)

LETTER writing is a peculiar art. So often the man of letters, accustomed to consider the precise effect of every individual word, allows himself considerable relaxation in his private correspondence and throws style to the winds. J. B. Yeats was not primarily a literary figure during his life-time, yet his letters contain so much good sense and such a deal of charm that they are perhaps more likely to remain alive and vivid than any of his pictures. In a letter to Oliver Elton, he writes: "It seems to me that one of the foolishest ideas is people's habit of constantly looking for a *complete man,* a kind of nonsense handed down from Goethe. What we want is incomplete men. I like all qualities to be in excess, or rather that each person should be a specialist." That is revealing and a good note to sound again to-day, when the student stands appalled at the amount of knowledge he must absorb before he can become a wise man in many things. Specialisation is very necessary for the artist, who is probably encumbered rather than helped by a too academic general knowledge.

Writing to W. B. Yeats, J.B. asks: "Do you notice how busy people always like ugliness? It has for them the actuality of a stench. It takes prolonged effort and prolonged leisure to begin to enjoy beauty. The modern doctrine of strenuousness so popular with democracies is fatal to beauty, and as to these Socialists—and I am a Socialist—they drag down the aesthetic sense and trample on it. To them artists and poets are egoists—the word gentleman is hateful to them. Yet a society of poor gentlemen upon whose hands time lies heavy is absolutely necessary to art and literature." A class of wholetime, trained "appreciators" such as Clive Bell envisaged, seems to have many advantages. But of course such a group would be completely impossible to achieve; and I am hardly doubtful that it would not have grave disadvantages in any case. These letters are a delight to read, not only for the valuable information they give about W.B.Y., but because of the courageous, gentle spirit of the author which pervades them all. While this is still not a complete collection of the letters, it is perhaps the most representative of the three so far published.

Mr. Levin's book provides an honest attempt to put James Joyce in his literary place. Already the clamour over Joyce's work has subsided: the fatbottoms have turned their attentions to other tasks—throwing crusts to the younger poets, for instance, in the pontifical manner of Agate. It is useless to quote from such a book as this. To get its flavour, you need to read it all. And those people who, for reasons of prejudice, insensitivity, or religion, choose to regard Joyce as a charlatan and a madman will undoubtedly continue on their way. But for the inquiring newcomer to Joyce's work and indeed, for the serious and appreciative student, Mr. Levin's book is richness.

Anne Ridler's play should be moderately easy to produce. It has a quiet beauty of its own, if somewhat lacking in dramatic qualities. It might have made a good play

for broadcasting, but the thought is sometimes perhaps too concentrated and the changing imagery too shifting to make it readily understandable to the *average* listener on a first hearing.

Louis MacNeice goes into the question of radio drama in an interesting preface to *Christopher Columbus*. The play itself is a masterpiece of its kind. Those who did not hear the broadcast can read the text and gain an excellent idea of the play's effectiveness. True, they will not be able to hear William Walton's stirring and appropriate incidental music; but, by way of compensation, they will have a better chance to appreciate how full a measure of poetry Mr. MacNeice has infused into his lines. As a secondary masterpiece, *Christopher Columbus* ranks high. It is so much more carefully constructed than most radio plays. And the emotional effects are carefully planned: they don't just happen, as in so many plays that are broadcast. One is left with a keen appreciation of Mr. MacNeice's craftsmanship and of his gifts as a poet. This is people's art of the best sort. I hope that Mr. MacNeice will see fit to give us other works of this nature from time to time.

David Gascoyne's poems merit all the praise they have already received, and more. Here is a consummate artist who has no biting eccentricities, whose voice is rounded, who shuns obscurity and who is animated by a high vision. The book is divided into five sections. The first of these, Religious Poems, contains a "Miserere" which must be about the finest religious piece produced in recent years. It begins with the slow music of "Tenebrae":

> It is finished! The last nail
> Has consummated the inhuman pattern and the veil
> Is torn. God's wounds are numbered.
> All is now withdrawn: void yawns
> The rock-hewn tomb.

and moves through six noble movements to the concluding "Ecce Homo":

> Involved in their own sophistry
> The black priest and the upright man
> Faced by subversive truth shall be struck dumb,
> Christ of Revolution and of Poetry,
> While the rejected and condemned become
> Agents of the divine.
>
> Not from a monstrance silver-wrought
> But from the tree of human pain
> Redeem our sterile misery,
> Christ of Revolution and of Poetry,
> That man's long journey through the night
> May not have been in vain.

I have not the room here to dwell upon any of the other sections. But this book has moved me more than anything I have read for a long time. It has faults, no doubt, but these have already been offered on the willing hands of Stephen Spender. It has a satisfying beauty which makes it an essential volume for every lover of poetry to possess.

Peter Yates goes forth upon his way clad in a prophecy (by Stephen Spender) that he is a poet worth watching. And we are told on the flap of *The Motionless Dancer* that a reviewer said of the author's earlier poems that Mr. Yates had been chiselling "a monument which is meant to outlast its time." I don't understand precisely what

this means. Making an honest guess, I presume, that these poems are judged by some to have qualities which will appeal to posterity. Perhaps they have—but I am afraid that I cannot admire posterity's taste if it will favour work of which these lines, from a poem "Second Chance," are representative :

Pure is division out of time.
The glacial torso and the marble hard—
But after mountain tops the avalanche ;
Harsh crash of ice, approach of death,
And those who sought perfection on the peaks
Observe too late their fatal dearth :
The shrinking tyranny of will
Lost in the friendly kisses of the plain !
The abstract terror of the dance
As thought conscripts the sexual thrill,
Imploring mirrors for a second chance.

Wilfrid Gibson's poems are quiet, successful in their own way, often effective. For me such reflections as those on seeing soldiers in the Café Royal are not adequate :

Though they by brutal means alone can win
The desperate fight against brutality,
Destroying the destroyer, that life can yet
Yield moments of delight, if they forget
Even for an instant the compulsory
Business of dealing, and of defying, death.

I do not think my generation feel that way about this war. Alan Rook and Keidrych Rhys, amongst others, get far nearer the modern soldier's heart than any of the older poets.

I am not sure whether the pamphlet by Miss Paneth (or paneth !) contains one long verse or nineteen shorter ones. What may be the eleventh verse reads thus :

perpetual love—I know not
how define the phrase
perpetual love
what hazy picture flashes through the mind—
a state of bliss
a quantity unknown
romantic version of an oft-seeing theme
a shaft discharged by cupid from his bow

Well, I don't know ! Miss Paneth apparently believes in perpetual sentences—there would appear to be no full stops or commas throughout the nineteen pages. I cannot tell you what it is all about, because it conveys nothing to me. I should say that this is about the worst book of verse I have ever read. Intending purchasers may like to note that there is a photograph of the authoress on the inside cover.

From that vast treasury of Greek poems, *The Greek Anthology,* written both before and after the Christian era, Mr. Forrest Reid has selected some pieces for translation. The results are happy. Here, for instance is a translation from Strato :

"In the evening when we said goodnight Moirio kissed me—though whether in reality or in a dream I do not know.

"I remember clearly everything else—what he said, the questions he asked—but whether he kissed me too, I only guess.

"For if it be true, how is it that I who was caught up into heaven still walk upon the earth ?"

II

The White Knight, by John Bayliss (Fortune Press, 6s.)
Elegies, by Alex Comfort (Routledge, 5s.)
Shadows of Chrysanthemums, by E. J. Scovell (Routledge, 5s.)
Second Front, by Jack Lindsay (Dakers, 3s. 6d.)
Passage to the Pole, by Leonard Clark (Fortune Press, 6s.)
The Seven Days of Jericho, by Patric Dickinson (Dakers, 3s. 6d.)

The poems of John Bayliss are quiet, cool, and often very beautiful in their effect. His imagery is sensuous and natural and many of his pieces have a balance and a feeling of inevitability about them. His book is prefaced with a page of sensible remarks. He writes: "My own belief is that I am writing at the beginning of a revival in poetry and my sympathies are with a neo-Romanticism I discern in my younger contemporaries, yet I am often amused at the tea-cup warfares stirred up by our latter-day critics . . ." This is a different attitude from the dogmatism of so many young poets. It is revealing, too, when one considers the disgruntled sneers which such no longer "slick young things" as Julian Symons wrap around the new romanticism on every possible occasion. This book is a difficult one to quote from, for scarcely a poem has not some fresh and individual interest. Here, in one mood, is a poem, "The Hyacinth":

> The Hyacinth that lies between
> green curves of glass in quietness,
> (white roots in dark water and
> a sheath restraining flowers' delight)
> —what loveliness its scent shall trail
> or make incendiary the air
> may not be seen in root and spear
> until they take a warmer trial.

Perhaps his philosophy is summed up in the concluding lines from "Epilogue—Testament and Prophecy":

> Therefore I say to you rogues who love living
> look to yourself and your wife or mistress
> as long as you may, and don't be leaving them
> sooner than you must to unknown distress.
> Rather live and watch how the world is falling
> than expect store angels to help you win
> comfort out of these dry foundations;
> for this is their end. We wait to begin.

This book is worth buying. Since it is one of the usually elusive productions from the Fortune Press, I doubt if, in fact, you'll find buying it an easy matter. However, have a try.

In *A Wreath for the Living,* Alex Comfort showed that he had considerable powers in reserve. Lovely and moving as these elegies are, there is still a feeling of something being held in reserve. Some of the anatomical images are perhaps a little unconvincing:

> one unmarried holds
> her spine's long intricate necklace for his shoulders
> pillows his broken face . . ."
>
> . . . where a grey spine breaks from the curved hills . . .

At Rush in Ireland, near the station
crowded moving nipples of the yew bushes
carry each one at evening a dark bird . . .

But there is a natural genius which manifests itself in every one of these poems. This, too, is a book which every real lover of poetry should buy.

Miss Scovell's book is curiously cold and detached; often it shows a reflection of Herbert Read. She is out of the run of women poets, however, and as the blurb on the book-jacket says, "she is particularly successful in the treatment of those themes which arise out of childhood, motherhood, and the subtler aspects of nature." Autumn seems to have a strong influence on Miss Scovell's mind, and her poems hold something of the sadness of that remote season, but none of its warmth.

Now let us turn to stuff on a very different plane. Jack Lindsay's pieces are competent, clean reportage—nothing else. He isn't a poet, and not one of the pieces in *Second Front* gets anywhere near to becoming a poem. If the average infantry soldier read verse and—improbable thought—read verse about the kind of life which he is forced to lead in the Army, Jack Lindsay's verse would probably strike him as being nearer the real thing than most. Mr. Lindsay is a good literary camera. If you like poetic snap-shots, skilfully taken with all the right light and shade, you should read this book. Let me show you a proof:

Six men in dungarees
picking up matches
all the morning scratching
round the Naafi and back again
scratching like hens under the trees
and making the good old crack again . . .

Leonard Clark has caught a few of the tricks of the trade of the new romantics. But he hasn't got anything to say, and at times he even forgets to be a craftsman. As a result, *Passage to the Pole* is a somewhat tedious journey. Pastiche is pastiche, the terms "good" and "bad" do not apply. It has not even the negative character of badness. How tired we are of this sort of wishy-washy whining:

Shall I find Peace beyond these tides of pain
Which now downpress (*ugh!*) upon my clouding eyes?
Will Comfort lift her sails of hope again
And Wisdom blow the breeze that never dies?

The piece ends with an invocation:

O Courage, be thou my supporting guide,
And Love, the certain flood on which I ride.

A suitable gift-book for the Band of Hope, perhaps.

The Seven Days of Jericho, by Patric Dickinson, is even duller. The book is prefaced by a long rigmarole on "the symbolism of Rahab and kindred matters." This discourse has a certain mild academic interest. The poem itself is like rather over-heavy brass. The writing is flat and pretentious:

Who has not known sometime, as evening comes
And the red sun dallies down like an autumn leaf
From the windless western tree, and he is alone,
A tearing utter desire for nothing definable?

The Seven Days of Jericho may appeal to some on religious grounds—it cannot possibly appeal on artistic grounds, for it shows less vigour than a swotted bluebottle on a grocer's ham. No doubt it will sell in its thousands. MAURICE LINDSAY.

POETS AND PRETENDERS

(Our regular contributor under this heading having been severely injured "by enemy action," we have been obliged to limit this feature to the following notices.)

Roy Fuller is already known from his *Poems* (1939) and *The Middle of War* (1942), but there is little sign of progress in *A Lost Season* (Hogarth Press, 3s. 6d.). Much of the scene is Africa, where the disillusioned cynicism of modern youth has crept under his skin. The nostalgia is almost dangerously introspective, and he seems to twist his metaphors and words until they resent his handling. Like many modern poets he uses the "formless" idiom, and when he occasionally adopts a more conventional form seems unable to obey its laws. It is therefore by the quality of the meaning of his verse that he must be judged, and too often the meaning is not even clear, much less the expression of a poet. When he does succeed, however, he succeeds very well, as in the opening poem "In Africa," and "War Letters." Let me quote from the former:

> Just as the lives of lions now are made
> Shabby with rifles,
> This great geography shrinks into sad
> And personal trifles.
>
> For those who are in love and are exiled
> Can never discover
> How to be happy: looking upon the wild
> They see for ever
>
> The cultivated acre of their pain;
> The clouds like dreams,
> Involved, improbable; the endless plain
> Precisely as it seems.

I cannot believe that *Modern Welsh Poetry* (Faber, 6s.) is fairly representative of poetry being written by the Welsh to-day. Nor, save for a couple of poems by the Editor, Keidrich Rhys, would one perceive that it was Welsh as distinct from Cornish or Cockney. It is true that occasional Welsh words are included for seasoning, but the mentality and the form, or lack of it, is monotonously the same among "moderns" in all parts of the British Isles, and I cannot honestly say that I should recognise the style of any one of the forty poets here included. There seems the same deliberate effort to avoid those forms of poetic expression which satisfy most poetry lovers, and in the effort to avoid traditional forms few of these writers succeed in creating the least variation of their own modernist idiom. Traditional poets at least had a hundred forms to choose from; these have but two or three, and these so difficult for the creation of great and memorable verse that scarcely a dozen of these poems will be re-read beyond the circles of the cult which it has come to be. At worst this verse is unintelligible; at the best, the conscious striving after unusual words and phrases spoils the desired simplicity of feeling when, as occasionally happens, conventional forms are used. Few of these writers sing; none has a message from the stars where the poet's vision used to roam. Everywhere is the same dull, tedious disillusionment, with illusions that a healthy mind should rapidly outgrow.

The most successful of these writers are Alun Lewis, with "The Sentry"; Robert Herring, with a welcome sense of self-discipline; and Vernon Watkins, whose "Sunbather" is a genuine case of "atmosphere" and mood transmitted into formed and memorable verse. And for a quotation? This is Ken Etheridge's reaction to Spring in "Spring Fragment":

The boy's green song and the lyric of youth
is a spent dream in the fingertips
of the trees.
The oak has uncurled his callow
empyrean yellow
and taken the wisdom of the sun and air
to a darker strength in his hands.
Cherry bouquet is Fragonard
pink and shadow-grey;
the blue air lights the lamps of magnolia
above gardens evening tended
where sleep the summer's roses . . .

Much has been written about airmen, their feelings, adventures and their point of view; here in *Air Force Poetry* (Bodley Head, 7s. 6d.) they speak for themselves. In spite of the modesty displayed by the two editor-contributors, John Pudney and Henry Treece, "this small collection of poems by men serving in the R.A.F. and F.A.A. put together under all the difficulties of Service life" is probably representative of the whole. What, then, are the thoughts and feelings of these young, fit, highly-trained and highly-chosen body of men, and what is their favourite technique?

It may be argued that those who have acquired the ability to express themselves in verse may not express the unuttered thoughts and emotions of the whole, but poets have ever been and should be pioneers and prophets. By such a standard these men have failed. For here, though there is much virile stuff, with a notable proportion of well-written poems, there is no collective message, no philosophy. Some love their job, and some are sick of it. Most, by way of contrast, turn to birds and flowers and trees. There is little of love. Perhaps the most welcome emotion is satire, for it is a cleansing power in a world grown grey with illusion. R. P. Brett's "Gatecrasher" is mordant stuff, and so is Timothy Corsellis' "Drill" and Norman Brick's "Enough of Bonny Sounding Words," which ends:

Here I go, full of self-pity,
self-honoured, gloried, loved, and all;
so will you please add the following ditty
to the usual one they'll hang on the wall:
"Greater love hath no man than this . . ."
you know how that one goes;
But it's what you might call a near miss,
So just to make sure, we'll make it close:
"Himself he loved, he was his own pride,
and for himself he lived—and died."

Of those who have chosen the modern "unformed" style of writing, few succeed. It is so easy to write, so very hard indeed to write memorably and well. Perhaps E. Denyer Cox's "Elegy" is one of the best attempts, while his "Flight Aspect" is almost the only poem which sings, or shows that in the writer's experience life could ever be a thing of joy. So many are disillusioned about life, and if this be so with our poets, what of those who claim not a poet's eyes? Here is the soil for a new vision and a new faith, but alas, no seed for the sowing.

Salute to the Muse (British Authors' Press, 3s. 6d.) contains the collected poems of E. B. W. Chappelow, F.R.A.S., F.R.S.A., a great-nephew of Professor George Stephens, the celebrated Runic scholar, and himself a student of no mean order, both in the world

of ancient languages and archaeology. His verse-writing, which achieves a high standard of excellence, is more than a vehicle for the expression of his life-labours, although these naturally form an effective background to some of his compositions. He gives us from all quarters of the world's history and his own experiences a series of varied subjects, all of which he treats in a masterly manner and his fashion of writing is noble, dignified and sincere. Those of us who like to be reminded of the tapestried magnificence of mediaeval Baghdad or the mysterious solemnity of ancient Greece, from blind Homer to the age of Pericles and enlightenment, will be able to slake the thirst of their yearning souls in such works as "Attabiyah," "Men Will Remember" and "The Ship of Dreams"; and others who would like to dissect matter of a more familiar nature will read with pleasure and emotion the five sonnets to a dead friend, the author's tribute to a life partner and his lament for a lost pet.

This writer's work is most convincing, a traditionalist, but never once an imitator, a deft rhymester, but yet his greatest work is "Men Will Remember" (a story of the prophecy of Sappho), told in a continuum of stanzas of metred but unrhyming lines, giving richly gilded pictures and a passion that is somewhat reminiscent of the work of W. B. Yeats in his earlier poems on classical subjects. In "Rupert Brooke," "The Phoenix" and "Horatian Fantasia" are shown good craftsmanship and the effective use of word-painting, and both felicity of sound and delicacy of diction in the poems which reveal an acceptance of the belief in the tenets of the Christian faith. Towards the close of the book one of the most remarkable poems is "On a Modern Traditionalist Poet," and here Chappelow's emotional word-play is especially effective. In this poem we waken with a shudder from our blissful reverie in the classic world and in the rich and sensuous gardens of the East and are fain to remember the inconceivable nightmare of modern times—of an art polluted by some of its own followers and a flag once the emblazoned ensignia of a nation's spiritual greatness and nobility be-draggled and brought low by the foolish literary works of a mistaken generation. All the poems are full of colour and the two last, which are sonnets, are especially memorable: "Musagetes," a lament for the Pythian Apollo, and "Non Omius Moriar"—a parallel impression of Horace's well-known final Ode in Book III.

To those who have been inclined to regard Nancy Cunard as having become something of a period piece, her two-page leaflet poem, *Man, Ship, Tank, Gun, Plane,* will provide a sort of calculated time-bomb shock. These breath-taking, galloping, but not stampeding phrases, though torn from immediacy, have yet achieved a homogeneity of form throughout eighteen insurgent stanzas. Proceeding partly by instinct and partly by tradition Miss Cunard's attempt to introduce us to a new mode of consciousness does not quite come off since she has failed, aesthetically, to subordinate the personal psychology and point-of-view and has indeed on the contrary rather asserted it, to the detriment of the poem.

"Some time hence they will come, I suppose, mood and time to weigh and consider
What metre best fits what matter . . if the Love-Courts were just in their day
Men will study old specious disputes—things like 'the sex of angels'—
Some, turn to the pink in a flint, and the artisan's osier way.
But NOW, no. None of such. All's at war. In front of me sea, and it's FRANCE;
And beyond that, the past, and it's SPAIN. Death hurls down a comrade's lyre:
Mid-March it is Alun Lewis, death precedes him with Nordahl Greig;
The whole face of one dream is SMOKE, and the voice in the next shouts FIRE."

Stirring, vital stuff, this—but, does it go far enough, as poetry? Poetry must of course attempt the maximum realisation and concretisation in its presentation of the

immediate experience but, disconnected from Eternity, Time, the present moment, becomes unreal. Where we disagree with the author is precisely at that point in her poem where the too-too-personal view obtrudes, as in the stanza which begins :

"I know—you hate these things written—wanting bluebell a-quiver in heather,
The secular flight of lone heron in lieu of massed iron wing,
Seeking olive at peace in grey stone-land, and glint on wild fur and feather
From sunrise to sunset, and ruins where only the long-dead sing."

THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

ALL that was said on this page by way of criticism in the May-June issue applies, alas, to the entries made for this. Let us hope that these had already been sent in, and that in the future contributors will, for their own art's sake, insist on a higher standard of craftsmanship. If we cannot all capture that spark of beauty which raises verse into poetry, we can at least take the trouble to make sound and polished verse. And we can at least clean our typewriters before submitting it.

The entries fell into the usual three categories. The first, and largest, did not even attain the level of good verse. A poem is a clear-cut thought or feeling expressed in an appropriate form, plus the above-mentioned flash of illumination which all of us woo yet few achieve the ability to command. To write even memorable verse the thought or feeling must be either original or at least exceptionally well expressed. Such verse becomes poetry when the god of beauty breathes into the clay of our moulding the breath of his own life. Meanwhile, those in this first category of entries are not yet even craftsmen worthy of the name. Lines are irregular, rhymes and verse-formation utterly trite, with rhythms which give the experienced reader hiccoughs. To these I say, go back to your desks and *work*, work as the goldsmith, sculptor, carpenter, or even shoe-repairer works, until his pride of craftsmanship is satisfied.

In the second group are a quantity of nicely written verses, most of which express a thought so trite, so slight, so commonplace as to be of no interest to anyone but the writer ; or the writer has got hold of an idea which, generally for want of sufficient working-out, he or she is unable to express. To these I say, dig out a deeper level of emotion, or strive to evolve a more shining, clear-cut thought. Then find the form that seems most suitable, even though it be hard to keep up as the poem goes on. Those who can without effort write good poetry, or even sound verse, are negligible in number. For most of us the rule is simple and unvarying, that the harder we work the happier will be that splendid thought when robed in its new-found words. Remember that Leonardo, Europe's greatest craftsman, took four years to paint the Mona Lisa.

The few remaining poems, not more than a couple of dozen out of all the poems sent in, are examples of sound craftsmen having something to say and knowing how to say it. Yet only a handful of these display that flash of something which makes of verse a poem. Yes, it is as hard as that. May I say, even to those in this third category, wait till the force of the inspiration has reached such pressure that it *must* be expressed or you feel that you will burst ; then let it flow forth, strong and original and utterly sincere. Let it write itself for a first beginning, and only later polish, polish, polish, until no other word will do save each that you have written down. Then leave it, and return to it, and polish again.

And so to my awards. Where the standard is not high the awards must fall in value and none of the poems submitted will set the Thames or even a poetry-lover's heart on fire. But I am pleased to make the award to WILFRED H. BARTLETT

(Tiverton), and for three reasons: first, because his poems have the quality of poetry, as above described; secondly, that they all show the same quality, where so many other entrants sent in one good effort in a waste of words, and thirdly, he gives the impression of great promise, which is refreshing when so many seem to have reached as far as they will go. All the "Highly Commended"—I would rather say sincerely commended—are on the fringe of poetry, and the Commended list are at any rate coming along.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Nancy Pollock, Wolverhampton; Marguerite M. Squire, Hinchley Wood, Surrey;
Mrs. M. Sheppard Fidler, Princes Risborough; Mary Gordon, Kingston Hill.

COMMENDED

Muriel Symmons, Salcombe; E. J. Worthington, Rosset, Wales;
Irene H. Moody, Vancouver; "Cygnet," Bushey, Herts.;
Alice M. Kent, Widnes; Rachel Bates, Ambleside;
O. M. Gracia, London, W.C.1; Mary Savidge, Bury St. Edmunds.

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation of subject) is continued. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach "The Premium Editor, THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by September 15th, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired 5s. should be sent. It is essential that entrants to this competition be members of The Poetry Society or registered subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW, and that each poem bears the name and address of the author. (Entries received after the formal closing date are carried forward to the next adjudication.)

* * *

I would so like to thank Elizabeth Myers for her beautiful article on the poetry of John Redwood Anderson. It is most enthrallingly written and makes me want to buy all his books at once!

To appreciate poetry is to be a poet, to listen intelligently and to read understandingly are both essential parts of poetry, and where would the poet be without this sincere and innate appreciation? what an attribute to a poet's gift is such an article, how sensitive is the response, how delicate the portrayal of her experience of the beauty he sets forth; she does not take away from his words by one remark, but adds and illuminates the significance and meaning of them.

If only all the modern poets had that responding, sensitive, golden string in the harp that they twang so unmelodiously, perhaps then would they rather humbly remain silent, realising if they are not endowed with the rare gift of really harmonious inspiration and the poetic instint, they had better leave poetry alone and be content to appreciate the real thing when they find it. Any clever person can write a sort of poetry, but inspired verse is the only thing that can lift the reader out of this noisy world, into that shimmering crystal cave of quietness that yet echoes with song.

Fetcham, Surrey. IRENE H. LEWIS.

As trustees of the Gunby Hall Estate, Lincs., Lady Montgomery-Massingberd, Major N. Leith-Hay-Clark and Field-Marshal Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, have presented the hall, its contents, and about 1,500 acres of land to the National Trust. Gunby is on the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds near Spilsby, some eight miles from Skegness, and not far from Tennyson's home at Somersby. It was Gunby that Tennyson wrote of as "a haunt of ancient peace."

DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: CIII

A new book from a poet widely known is at hand for review, *The Proud People*, by Joseph Joel Keith (The Wings Press). Cyril Clements writes the foreword and from it we give the following telling paragraph:

"Besides being all-embracive in his interests, Mr. Keith is also like Herrick, notable for his blending of melody and perfectly chosen words: take this stanza from "Where the Doe Awakes," in a poem in *The Saturday Review of Literature*:

It is strange that in the darkness no hungry wing is whirring,
and no deer is the target when the living body glistens
through dull deceptive branches. No enemy is boring
through the place that nightfall fashioned. The silent friend listens."

Very stirring is Mr. Keith's "Address to the Men of Arms":

We address the men of arms—
the living: the dead: and, never the least, the half dead:
we forget not the past:
    it is touched like a wound that is healing;
we forget not the future:
    it is held like a good child growing;
we forget not war:
    it is burnt like a brand in our minds;
we forget not peace;
    it is held like a light in our hands.

Very appropriate, when the cry is for farmers, is "The Ploughman":

Here is a man,
The waves of ground
move back again
when the opened sound
of spring breaks through,
This man is one
who feels the sky's
light rivers run
into his earth;
he hears it sup
deeply, and sees
the seed come up,
up through the warm
and rainy hour,
and break, like his heart,
in fullest flower.

Harold Vinal, editor of the poetry magazine *Voices*, and a poet with a number of books to his credit, sends to me for review *The Compass Eye* (The Comet Press, New York). Glancing at the index the variety of titles is enticing. We find very characteristic "Long Song" (p. 17) and "Wind Manifesto" (p. 26). Harold Vinal treats us to a group of sonnets too long to give, but we will indulge the publisher to the extent of giving the first, "Upon Olympus":

The hour was holy and a tremor stirred
The bright plateaus before us, as we came
Below Olympus. In the dusk we heard
Omen of hoofs, we saw a sudden flame,
Burning against the Macedonian plain.
There were the centaurs grazing in the sun,
And great Zeus leaning, as he dozed again,
Lost in the ether of oblivion.

And there they drank, their lofty heads bent low
Toward the cool waters; for a moment we
Were no more mortal. As we turned to go,
We heard an ominous wind wake suddenly,
And saw the lunging centaurs take to flight,
Their white flanks streaming with immortal light.

Vinal is a very talented man, a fine musician, a good talker, a valuable friend, as well as editor and poet.

Ethel Russell presents her second book of poetry, *Lantern in the Wind,* through the Kaleidograph Press. She is a member of many poetry groups of America and of The Poetry Society of Great Britain. Mrs. Russell is no stranger to us; her first book we reviewed not long ago. She gives us a love song, "Close to my Heart," which follows:

Somewhere the phoebe calls its mate,
Somewhere hills are greening now
While buttercups find subtle ways
Of blossoming before the plow.

The haw is veiled in fragrant pink;
The plum, a pile of late blown snow.
From spring's dawn tower carillon bells
Swing salutations to-and-fro.

With all about me melody
So vibrant with the blossomed spring,
Close to my heart I hold your love
Unshattered through full blossoming.

She hails from Kansas. Her married life carried her to Virginia.

In *Time and Tide* (Bruce Humphries, Inc.) Florence M. McIntosh discloses great simplicity: as an example we give "Taint Not This Day":

Taint not this day with unkind words,
With thoughts degrading or untrue;
Mar not its beauty with cruel deeds;
Keep its bright shades a perfect hue.

Fill every hour with sunny smiles,
With words which men might oft recall;
Make hands and feet for others work;
Cause no weak child to stoop or fall.

Kneel at your bedside when day ends;
Lift up your heart to God in prayer;
Thank Him that you have made new friends;
Ask that they too may this love share.

and also "Life's Sailboat":

Have you ever watched a sailing boat
Out on the calm of the summer sea
Gliding along at a gentle float;
And have you wondered her destiny?

Have you ever watched that boat in gales
Out on the storm of a winter sea
Being tossed about, and her snow-white sails
Battered and blowing tempestuously?

Have you ever watched that sailing craft
Scurrying across the open bay,
Little more than just an old board raft—
Sails ripped from her side and blown away?

As you stand and watch the boats at sea,
And you think about this worldly life,
Are you master of your destiny,
Or like the ship but tossed in strife ?

We find Fred Rust belongs to the Maine poets. He attended Williams College and subsequently taught school. Fascinated by poetry, he opened up a bookshop in Kansas City and from there headed Bostonward. We learn that he is the president of the Rust-Craft Publishers. *The Road Ahead and Bypaths* (Bruce Humphries) is his third book. Looking through the pages one is drawn through country vistas. Mr. Rust's poetry has a light charm as illustrated in the following, "Early March in New England" :

The distant scene is gray as gray can be,
And yet the pussywillows nod to me!
A bit of ice is there beside the wall,
But I can hear a distant robin call !

A day ago soft snowflakes filled the air,
But now the sun is warm, the sky is fair.
Though one could scarcely call it spring to-day,
I smile—I know spring's really on its way !

A second book by Don Erman, *Legend of the Bridal Chamber* (Bruce Humphries), is full of musical lyrics and they suggest the setting of them to song. A wide traveller, with his home in Miami, he has viewed much of the beauty of the natural world. We find Mr. Erman very versatile. He writes in many forms with equal ease. The verses are delightfully light and we read "Superlative" :

When I'm in search of ecstasy
I do not reach for skies
Nor seek the yellow jessamine
Whose scent always defies,
Nor purple clustered violets
Nor emerald tinted sea.
There is a world of loveliness
Your coming brings to me.

We find little record of this writer in the foreword of *The Turning Wind,* by Muriel Rukeyser (Viking Press), but as we read her poems we are constrained to think her well educated. The picture she sends us shows a young woman, and we dip into the book to learn how much she has gleaned. Let us measure her talent by reading portions of the title poem :

Knowing the shape of the country. Knowing the midway travels of
migrant fanatics, living that life, up with the dawn and
moving as long as the light lasts, and when the sun is falling
to wait, still standing ;

Turning back to the first poem, which is striking, we will give you the following from "Rotten Lake" :

Walking at night, they are asked Are you your best friend's
best friend ? and must say No, not yet, they are
love's vulnerable, and they go down to Rotten Lake
hoping for wonders.

Shall we think that this is the way she feels about our America ?

years of night-walking in stranger cities, relost and unnamed,
recurrent familiar rooms, furnished only with nightmare,
recurrent loves, the glass eye of unreal ambition,
years of initiation.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

SELECTED POEMS OF 1944
THE POETRY SOCIETY'S ANNUAL

The Council of The Poetry Society has decided to publish an annual volume of new poetry, whether "traditional" or "modern" in form, to illustrate the best in contemporary verse. It is hoped that such a volume will bring to focus the growing awareness of poetry in our day and further stimulate and revive the expression in poetry of the spirit of man. It will provide a link between the old and new in poetry, and by insisting on a high level of craftsmanship, raise the standard of contemporary verse. Many of the problems in the field of poetry may therein find solution, and in any event a selection of the best poems of the year, chosen by a committee belonging to no one school of poetry, is a national service which it is the duty and privilege of The Poetry Society to perform.

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY.

Contributions are invited from all sources. The Selection Committee will give careful and impartial consideration to all poems submitted, which must be original, hitherto unpublished, and not exceeding four from any one contributor.

Poems should not exceed 150 lines, a shorter length being preferred, and two typed copies of each poem should be sent, together with a stamped addressed envelope for reply, without which no MSS. will be returned. No covering letter is necessary. A pseudonym may be used, but each poem must bear the full name and address of the writer.

Entirely unacceptable poems will be returned promptly; poems retained for further consideration may be used by the author elsewhere, provided that their possible use in the annual is not thereby jeopardised. Those whose poems are finally accepted will be so informed. The Selection Committee accept no responsibility for MSS., and a copy of all poems should be retained by the writer.

No payment will be made for poems published in the annual, but the copyright of all such poems will remain with the authors, subject to their inclusion in the annual, and to any quotation or reproduction or other use arising directly therefrom.

The Selection Committee has no desire to define what is meant by poetry, but a high standard of craftsmanship is expected, and while no conditions are imposed with regard to the form or content of the poems, in the view of the Committee a poem should have a recognisable form and meaning.

The restriction about unpublished poems may be modified to permit the inclusion of poems of exceptional merit published in a periodical during the current year, such as the winning poems of the Greenwood and Sonnet Competitions in THE POETRY REVIEW.

Readers of this statement, whether or not contributors to the annual, are also invited to bring to the notice of the Committee poems published in the course of the year, either in a periodical or in volume form, which they think merit inclusion. Two copies of such poems should be sent with the fullest available information regarding author, source and publisher.

All MSS. and recommendations for inclusion in the first issue of the Annual should be sent as soon as possible, and in any event not later than December 1st next, to the P.S.A. Selection Committee, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. The Annual for 1944 will be published, in a distinctive format with cloth binding, as early as possible in 1945. Poems received after the closing date will be regarded as being submitted for inclusion in the Annual for the ensuing year.

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